

**Israeli elections**  
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## Cairo waits to see

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak, speaking in a joint press conference with visiting Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, yesterday, said "we will deal with whichever Israeli prime minister comes, according to his flexibility in solving the [Palestinian] issue." He hoped, however, that the new prime minister will not adopt the kind of inflexible position taken by former Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Commenting on the two candidates for the Israeli premiership, Mubarak said, "We know Peres and understand his mentality and flexibility. But I don't know Netanyahu."

The president pointed out, however, that Egypt had dealt with the Likud in the past, and that it was a Likud prime minister, Menachem Begin, who concluded a peace treaty with Egypt in 1979.

Ossama El-Baz, President Mubarak's political advisor, told Iqbal Nour, "We hope that this election, and the political developments that will ensue, will result in reinforcing Israel's commitment to peace. It is vital that all parties involved in the peace process see tangible progress without delay."

El-Baz added, "We look at the Israeli elections with interest and hope they will lead to the formation of a cabinet that would adopt tangible measures and policies conducive to peace."

The view from Cairo was somewhat different on the opposition front. Ma'moun El-Hodeibi, spokesman for the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, told Rasha Saad, "There is no real difference between both candidates. One struggles with his hands and the other with a silk handkerchief."

The leftist Tagammu Party, on the other hand, preferred Labour. Tagammu leader Khaled Mohieddin told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that in terms of peace, Labour is better than Likud. "If Peres wins, the process will continue, and be better than before the elections when he faced a lot of pressure," said Mohieddin.

## Egypt's word

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak and Libya's leader Muammar Gaddafi differed openly yesterday on Tripoli's decision to expel more Palestinians working in Libya, reports Nevine Khashil. Gaddafi said at a joint press conference that his understanding was that the Palestinians "now had a president, a flag and a land. We are not sending them away, but bringing them closer to their homeland," he added.

Mubarak interjected that the Palestinian problem was yet to be resolved and appealed to the colonel "to reconsider his position on the [issue] to avoid further complications."

Nonetheless, the two leaders, after some six meetings since Gaddafi's arrival on Friday, were in agreement that Libya was not constructing a chemical weapons plant at Tarhuna, as alleged by the US, which has threatened military action. "The US still insists that we have a chemical plant. Why won't they take Egypt's word on this?" Gaddafi asked. "Isn't Egypt to be trusted?" he quipped. "Find another witness for them," joked Mubarak.

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# A fateful choice?

As Israelis went to the polls in an atmosphere of high tension, the forecasts were for a high turnout and a cliffhanger result

Israeli voters, almost evenly split between Prime Minister Shimon Peres and right-winger Benjamin Netanyahu, streamed into the polling stations in a parliamentary election that could set the agenda for Middle East peace talks into the next century.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army confined more than two million Palestinians to the West Bank and Gaza Strip while Israelis voted separately for the first time for a prime minister and a parliament. More than 25,000 policemen, soldiers and civilian volunteers were deployed across the country, including 3,000 in Jerusalem alone, in an unprecedented security operation against any possible threats by right-wing Israelis or radical Palestinian groups to disrupt the elections. And, amidst rising tension, security sources said Peres had cancelled afternoon appearances and been provided with extra protection after a flurry of death threats by right-wing Israelis.

Netanyahu, the Likud Party leader, who vowed a tougher line in peace talks with the Palestinians and Syrians, cast his ballot in Jerusalem about 90 minutes after the polls opened at 7am. "Defeat," said Netanyahu, responding to a question at the polling station. "I think my opponent is probably considering it."

I haven't," Peres, the Labour Party leader backed by Washington and most Arab governments as the man to complete the five-year-old Arab-Israeli peace process, voted later in Tel Aviv. He had called the election the most important since Israel's creation in 1948.

"I think it is a historic decision... one road leads to peace, the other to settlements, and these are in total contradiction," Peres told reporters. "I hope the nation chooses peace."

Asked on Tuesday if a Netanyahu win would curb violence, Peres said: "No, I think it would increase it, because if Likud takes over I think the peace process will come to an end."

Peres reportedly looked cheerful and confident. "It was the easiest campaign I have ever known," he said. Unlike previous election campaigns, he added, people had not thrown tomatoes at him during election rallies. Asked by reporters why he had taken his time in the polling booth, he quipped: "I am an undecided voter."

The first indication of the winner was expected with the release of exit polls soon after the close of voting at 10pm, but polls released on the eve of voting showed Peres maintaining a precarious lead.

The last survey, released just hours before voting started, gave Peres a razor-thin two per cent lead — 50 per cent, compared to 48 per cent for Netanyahu — less than the pollers' margin of error. Two polls earlier on Tuesday showed Peres three percentage points ahead.

Turnout has historically been around 80 per cent, and the central elections committee said 50.9 per cent of Israel's 3.93 million registered voters had cast their ballots by the end of the first nine hours of voting.

This figure is 3.8 per cent higher than the turnout recorded at the same stage during Israel's last parliamentary elections in 1992.

Feelings among Palestinian Israelis, who make up 13 per cent of the electorate, were mixed between anger towards Peres for his military onslaught on Lebanon last month, and fear that a Likud victory would lead to more suffering for the Palestinians.

Some of the Palestinian Israelis interviewed on the day of voting said racist Likud campaigning had driven them back to the Labour incumbent. Others disagreed. "Lebanon

proved it: both candidates are made out of the same mud," Mahmoud Abu Hamza, an Israeli Arab told Reuters.

Meanwhile, campaigning on election day was in high-volume, occasionally flaring into violent battles between the camps of right and left. Vans plastered with posters and stickers declaring support for the two rivals screamed to a halt, while voices amplified through loudspeakers competed with each other.

According to AFP police had reported only five arrests by the afternoon, though some 40 clashes and scuffles broke out between supporters of the two camps.

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## News analysis

## The fear consensus

The Israeli elections have been hailed as a battle for peace. But, writes **Graham Usher** from Jerusalem, they have actually created a consensus against it

The turnout of nearly four million Israelis to vote in this dull climax of a campaign is typified by paradox. On the one hand, many Israeli and foreign commentators have described the 14th Knesset poll as the most significant in Israel's history, especially for achieving peace with most of the Arab world. On the other, the campaigns of the rival parties have consolidated a new consensus in Israeli politics which has made the prospect of an enduring peace more — rather than less — distant.

Nowhere was the new consensus more apparent than in the TV debate between Shimon Peres and Benjamin Netanyahu aired on 26 May. Despite lip-service support for the peace process, Netanyahu laboured the point that Israelis have never felt more personally insecure, "afraid to ride buses, afraid to go to the shopping mall". In the 14 minutes allocated to the Likud leader in the 30-minute broadcast, Netanyahu repeated the word "fear" no less than 10 times. Peres' response to all this was wholly defensive; he promised to "triumph over terrorism" and believed that he could realise a peace agreement with the Palestinians which would "exclude" compromises on Jerusalem and Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Even on the eve of the vote, the same obsessive mindset was in place. "This was an election campaign against Katyushas and suicide bombers," said Peres on 28 May. If such a vision is genuinely what most Israelis regard as peace, it is hardly surprising that most pundits saw the TV debate — if not yet the election — as a clear victory for Netanyahu.

Israeli historian Ilan Pappé translates this emphasis on security into what it means for the final-status negotiations with the Palestinians. "The US-Peres consensus

on the final talks with the Palestinians has been consecrated with these elections," he says. "No division of Jerusalem, the Jordan River will stay as Israel's military border; no dismantling of settlements in the West Bank; and no return of Palestinian refugees. Any concessions made to the Palestinians will be symbolic rather than substantial."

It is a wholly bleak scenario. But the Likud vision, if anything, is even worse. In the course of the campaign, Netanyahu has pledged to keep Jewish settlers in Hebron, "strengthen" West Bank settlements to the tune of \$1.3 billion and not withdraw Israeli troops from the Golan Heights. Under international and US pressure, Netanyahu may moderate these positions, especially on the Golan. But there are countervailing political pressures born of Israel's new electoral system that suggest there will be little flexibility either on Peres' or Netanyahu's part.

The decision to create two separate ballots for the Knesset and prime minister was intended to weaken the role of the myriad small parties in Israeli politics. In fact, it has strengthened them. As Israeli analyst Baruch Kimmeling remarks, the rightward shift of Israeli society since the Oslo agreement means that the bloc of Labour, Meretz and the Arab parties which brought Rabin to power in 1992 "will not repeat itself in 1996". Both Meretz and Labour were expected to lose seats on 29 May. The upshot is that Peres will be forced to build a ruling coalition which includes Israel's religious parties and possibly the far-right National Religious Party (NRP). The former will name their price as a hardening of the government's stand on Jerusalem, while the latter will demand no removal of settlements.

Should Netanyahu and Likud be elected, they will similarly be constrained, and not just because of the or-



An armed settler casts his vote in the Palestinian city of Hebron (photo: AP)

thodox parties and the NRP. Any future Likud government will have to include as senior ministers such hawks as Ariel Sharon, Rafael Eitan and Yitzhak Mordechai. In an article entitled "Likud's plan, simply put", Sharon gave flesh to his idea of "peace": no acceptance of the Oslo Accords, permanent Israeli control over all territory not yet transferred to the Palestinian Authority and no peace agreement with Syria "until the post-Assad era". Sharon is no minnow. Voted second on Likud's list of Knesset candidates, Israel's defense minister during the 1982 Lebanon invasion is also the driving force behind the bloc of David Levy's Geshet Party and Eitan's Tsomet, on whose support Likud is and will be utterly dependent. Netanyahu may be able to moderate Sharon, but he cannot ignore him.

"It's a choice between cancer and AIDS," said one Palestinian from Jerusalem on the eve of the poll. "But I choose cancer [Peres], because at least there are cures. There is no cure for AIDS." Maybe — but people also die from cancer. The dilemma is shared by many progressive Israelis and Arabs as they await the outcome of Israel's "most fateful" poll. The election campaign has partially healed the traumatic rifts in Israeli society caused by Rabin's assassination and the suicide bombs. But, in doing so, it has created a consensus that may spell the end of peace.

## Journalists' last resort

Appalled by the Shura Council debate of a draft press law, journalists believe only intervention by President Mubarak will save the day. **Shaden Shehab** gauged their reactions

Last week's three-day debate in the Shura Council over the draft for a new press law has left journalists gloomy and pessimistic. Many council members defended the provisions of Law 93, the controversial current press law passed in May of last year, and demanded stiff penalties for publication offences. Journalist members of the council found themselves virtually alone as they fiercely defended the freedom of the press and journalists' rights.

The draft under debate had been prepared by a committee of the Shura Council. It represented the most recent stage of work which has been continuing since President Mubarak intervened to defuse the crisis between journalists and the government, which erupted in the wake of the passing of Law 93 a year ago.

The draft cancels all the provisions of Law 93, with the exception of Article Two, which covers various publication offences and imposes stiff penalties. Contrary to journalists' demands, those penalties still include imprisonment, although the severity of sentences is reduced.

The draft press law and a report on the council's discussion will be submitted to President Mubarak within a few days.

The seemingly unbridgeable gap between journalist members of the Shura Council and those outside the profession led Press Syndicate chairman and Shura Council member Ibrahim Nafie to request Mubarak's intervention once again to defuse the crisis. "We call upon the justice and advanced liberal and democratic thinking of President Mubarak to be the final arbiter on this law," he said.

Prominent journalists interviewed by *Al-Ahram Weekly* supported Nafie's view, believing it to be their only remaining option. They were disappointed at the open hostility of many council members towards the press.

"Their main target was to tarnish the image of journalists, to turn public opinion against them and undermine their role," said Salaheddin Hafez, managing editor of *Al-Ahram*. "They want society to regard journalists as enemies, to justify their call for harsh penalties."

The situation has reached a critical stage, Hafez warned, because there is not

much time left before the law goes to the People's Assembly for final enactment. "If such extremist opinions are still prevailing at this stage, then the law that is passed won't be much different from Law 93," he predicted. It was important that journalists did not waver at this stage: "Journalists should stay united and stick to their demands, which basically amount to the repeal of Law 93," Hafez said.

"President Mubarak will have the final say, and we all know that he is in favour of the freedom of the press," he added.

Salah Eissa, a leftist journalist and former member of the Press Syndicate Council, said that the Shura Council discussions revealed the extent of the personal animosity with which many council members viewed the press. "It was evident that many members are taking it as an opportunity to get their revenge on journalists," he said. "Their attitude lacked responsibility towards the society as a whole; they based their arguments on personal experiences and grudges."

Eissa is not optimistic about the final outcome. "After hearing the debate on TV, I'm very pessimistic. I don't think the People's Assembly members will be any different, especially as they are the ones who passed Law 93 in the first place. It seems that we have reached a dead end."

He too saw Mubarak's intervention as the journalists' last hope. "Our only remaining option is to clarify our demands and point of view to President Mubarak, through a meeting with the Press Syndicate Council or the council chairman. We have to admit that under Mubarak the country has enjoyed greater democracy and freedom, particularly freedom of the press. The president is aware that a political system based on democracy is by definition opposed to restrictions on freedom and anti-democratic measures."

Salama Ahmed Salama, a senior columnist at *Al-Ahram*, agreed. "Journalists will have to leave the matter to President Mubarak... because it seems that the people holding extremist views are the majority in the legislative bodies, and they are not likely to change their stand." The Shura Council debate, he said, revealed that there was a trend opposed to journalists and the freedom of the press. "It is a vi-

cious circle. Every time journalists think that a fair compromise will be reached, the problem starts all over again."

Equally desolate was Gamal Badawi, the chief editor of the Wafd Party's daily newspaper, *Al-Wafd*. "We have reached a dead end," he said. "I am very pessimistic. The confrontation between the government representatives and journalists has reached its peak."

But according to Osama El-Ghazali Harb, Shura Council member and chief editor of *Al-Ahram*'s political science journal, *Al-Siyasa Al-Dawia*, "The whole matter was handled in a wrong way from the beginning. Law 93 was a mistake and the attempts to repeal it have taken a wrong turn as well."

Harb added: "Everyone should realise that the confrontation is not just between journalists and the government. It is between journalists and the whole society." Journalists, he said, should do more to get public opinion on their side, by making people realise that their demands would benefit society as a whole.

"Journalists must explain that they have a code of ethics that they are seriously willing to use, to make people understand that while journalists are asking for their rights, they are also serious about fulfilling their duties."

Journalists were right in having their misgivings after the Shura Council debate, Harb said. However, they should not hold on to demands that cannot be realised at this time, and must be prepared to compromise. And while the draft press law prepared by the semi-governmental committee did not fulfil journalists' ambitions, "it is much better than Law 93 and other previous laws concerning the press."

Asked what journalists should do during the next stage, Harb replied: "I am not in favour of strikes, because they could have negative effect and provoke public opinion against the press. Journalists are asking for greater democracy and freedom, so they have to use democratic means to express their demands."

Journalists had rejected the draft law during their 21 May extraordinary General Assembly, insisting that their previously demanded amendments and additions be included in the draft.

(see p.2)

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# Shura members slam the press

A three-day debate at the Shura Council on a long-awaited draft press law revealed a wide rift between members on their stand towards freedom of the press and its role in society.

While journalist members of the council strongly defended the profession and emphasised press freedom and journalists' right of access to information, others attacked the press and said journalists' opinion should not be considered while drafting the law, accusing them of violating individuals' privacy and attacking government officials without justification.

As a result of this wide split in views, Ibrahim Nafie, chairman of the Press Syndicate and editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram*, suggested that President Hosni Mubarak, who has repeatedly confirmed his commitment to freedom of the press, should be the final arbiter.

Journalists are unhappy with the provisions of the new draft. At a General Assembly of the Press Syndicate last week, Nafie said that there had been some steps forward, principally the cancelling of preventive detention for journalists under investigation for publication offences. However, he conceded that journalists' main demand, the repeal of Law 93 as a whole, including its penalties for publication offences, had not been met. Journalists had demanded that publication offences be punishable by fines only, rather than imprisonment.

The Council's speaker, Mustafa Kamel Helmi, called upon members not to be divided on the committee's recommendations, saying that each member "represented the conscience and hope of this nation". After discussion in the Shura Council the committee's report will be submitted to President Mubarak, who will then refer it back, in the form of a draft law, to the Council for a second review before it goes to the People's Assembly for enactment.

The committee's report included five chapters, on press freedom and the rights and duties of journalists, the issuing and ownership of newspapers, regulations concerning national newspapers, the Supreme Press Council and transitional rules.

Chairman of El-Tahrir Press and Publications, Samir Ragab, the first journalist member of the Council to take the floor, praised President Mubarak as the main driving force behind the new draft. He stressed the im-

portance of journalists' rights of access to information and sources, and said that the Press Syndicate should be the sole party responsible for investigating violations committed by journalists.

Rifaat El-Seid, a journalist and secretary-general of the leftist Tagammu Party, argued that some articles of the new draft law were unjustifiably severe. The imprisonment penalty in the new law was meaningless, he said, "because forcing a journalist to correct himself is the worst penalty. Thus, I cannot approve this new draft."

On the other hand, Taher El-Masri, a deputy from Beheira governorate said that although the Egyptian constitution confirmed freedom of the press, that freedom was associated with a responsibility to protect society's values.

Mohamed El-Said El-Daqaq, an appointed deputy and dean of Alexandria University's Faculty of Law, contended that because of the press's great influence on public opinion, "deviations in this field might lead to dangerous damage to individuals and society". Therefore, he argued, penalties should be stiffened as a deterrent to journalists.

He was countered by journalist Sikina Fouad, who delivered an impassioned defence of the rights of journalists. Fouad emphasised the important role the press has played in terms of uncovering the embezzlement of public money and enlightening the public. "This is why the press has always been the first party to consider and respect the values of this society," said Fouad. She added: "We should not have a law that looks with suspicion at the press, a law that codifies some bizarre cases, or a law that makes the exception a rule." Fouad said she hoped deputies would concentrate on the honourable struggle of the press to preserve the integrity of society. "I do not know why they want to put the press on one hand and the traditions and values of society on the other in opposition," Fouad said.

Nafie told the Council that in his capacity as chairman of the Press Syndicate, he was not asking for special privileges for journalists. What he wanted was "legitimate protection for them so that they will not be negatively affected by an unfair law. We want the press to be governed by a rational law that strikes a

The Shura Council was this week the site of heated exchanges between journalists, defending their profession and press freedom, and other members accusing the press of violating society's values

balance between the freedom of the press and the rights of citizens to uphold their honour and interests." Nafie cited a recent interview with President Mubarak in *Al-Gomhouriya* newspaper, in which Mubarak said he wanted a new press law that was suited to the needs of the 21st century.

Nafie listed the positive aspects of the draft law — cancelling preventive detention, guaranteeing the journalists' right of access to information, giving the Press Syndicate full responsibility for disciplining its members, checking the advertisement policies in newspapers to ensure they are in line with the traditions of society, and preventing the arrest of journalists except by order of the Prosecutor General. But nevertheless he insisted there were still some shortcomings.

Makram Mohamed Ahmed, Chairman of Al-Hilal Publishing Organisation and chief editor of the weekly magazine *Al-Mussawwar*, charged there was a conspiracy to strip Egypt of its role as leader of the Arab press, but warned: "Those who want to marginalise the Egyptian press are in reality seeking to marginalise the role of Egypt itself."

Talaat Mansour, a retired police brigadier and a deputy for El-Minya, launched the severest attack against journalists during the second day of discussions. Mansour argued that the Council should not invite representatives of professions to listen to their views on laws that relate to them. "For example we cannot invite drug traffickers when we discuss a new law to combat drugs," said Mansour. The new law, he maintained, should be modified to serve the interest of society as a whole and not the interests of a "profession that thrives on eating away at the dignity of honourable citizens."

And, Mohamed Farid Zakaria, a former secretary general of the Liberal Party, severely attacked his party's newspaper, *Al-Ahram*, alleging that it defamed upright characters such as Sheikh Mohamed Metwalli El-Shaarawi, whom he described as "Egypt's fourth pyramid".

But Mustafa Kamel Murad, the Liberal Party's chairman and an appointed member of the Council, rejected both Zakaria's claims and the draft law. "This draft imposes a siege on citizens," he said. "We have not seen a press law of which one-fifth of the articles are devoted to penalties against journalists anywhere else in the world."



photo: Abdel-Mahab El-Sorh

## Syndicate struggles on

JOURNALISTS stopped work for five minutes at noon last Monday as a symbolic protest against Law 93, a year after it was enacted, while several hundred of their numbers gathered at the Press Syndicate for a three-hour sit-in, reports Shaden Shehab.

The protestors attached black ribbons to their shirts and shouted slogans against Law 93, and for the freedom of the press, while loudspeakers played rousing freedom songs. Banners around the syndicate left observers in no doubt as to the journalists' view of the law: "No to the press assassination law," read one. "Abolishing Law 93 is the first step towards press freedom," said another, joined by: "We want rights and duties, not just punishments."

Although police stood by with tear gas canisters at the ready as soon as journalists approached the gates of the syndicate, there was no trouble between protestors and police.

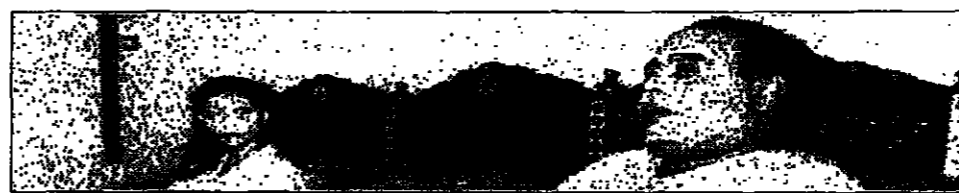
Journalists present signed a statement assuring that they would continue their struggle until Law 93 was repealed. The Union of Arab Journalists, headed by the Egyptian Press Syndicate chairman, Ibrahim Nafie, issued a separate statement underlining "its solidarity with Egyptian journalists against this law and all laws against press freedom."

The statement said that "the main demands made by journalists during their seven extraordinary general assemblies are still unmet". The Arab journalists union urged decision-makers to consider and respect the amendments demanded by the journalists, in order to introduce a democratic law supporting the freedom of the press.

Meanwhile, the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA) said in a statement that "the current legislation throws away basic human liberties and lacks the necessary measures to strengthen and support freedom of the press." CHRLA said that 99 journalists, including 25 editors-in-chief, have been investigated under the law, "despite government promises that the law would not be implemented until new legislation was passed." While the draft law currently under review reduces the penalties for libel and publishing false news or information, it "leaves 22 other offences untouched".

## Law on Abu Zeid's side

An amendment to the Commercial and Civil Pleading Law may have decided the pending case of Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid. Amira Howeihi investigates the amendment's implications



Lawyers for Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid, the Cairo University professor ordered by the Court of Appeals to be divorced from his wife on the grounds of his apostasy, have sent a memorandum to the Court of Cassation demanding that his case, currently being reviewed in that court, be cancelled.

The request came exactly one week after the People's Assembly approved an amendment stipulating that cases filed in any court should be based on a "personal, direct and authorised interest". The amendment, a modification of Article Three of the Commercial and Civil Pleading Law, applies to all cases, including those pending in court, such as Abu Zeid's. While sparking controversy in the Assembly's debates, it was nevertheless passed by an overwhelming majority. Outside the Assembly, it was severely criticised by Islamist lawyers, who claimed it had been "tailored" for the Abu Zeid case.

Sheikh Youssef El-Badri, the Islamist preacher who orchestrated the divorce case against Abu-Zeid, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that he would strive to maintain his "achievements" by contesting the constitutionality of the amendment, and a pre-

viously-enacted law restricting the recourse of *hebsa*, on the grounds that they run contrary to *shari'a* law.

Under certain interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence, *hebsa* is the right of every Muslim to take legal action against another Muslim he believes has harmed society or Islam, or violated Islamic teachings.

The Abu Zeid controversy began three years ago, when he applied for promotion at Cairo University, submitting two research works — *Imam Al-Shafie and A Critique of Religious Discourse* — to a committee for consideration. The committee denied him promotion on the grounds that his writings demonstrated a rejection of the fundamental tenets of Islam. Abu Zeid took legal action to contest the committee's decision.

A group of Islamist lawyers, led by El-Badri, used the principle of *hebsa* to wrest a decision from the Appeals Court last summer ordering the couple to be divorced on the grounds that Abu Zeid was an apostate, and so could not be married to a Muslim woman. The verdict, which put Abu Zeid on Islamist militants' death lists, forced the Cairo University professor and his wife to take leaves of ab-

sence from the university and take temporary residence in the Netherlands.

The memorandum sent to the Court of Cassation by Abu Zeid's lawyers called on the court to "stop the case and cancel the divorce verdict previously issued by the Appeals Court," reported defence lawyer Hassan Abdel-Wahed. The defence team also sent a copy of the amended law to the court, which, Abdel-Wahed said, may not yet have been officially notified.

"We have very limited time, and we have to act quickly because the court had previously scheduled the date of its final ruling for 24 June," he said. The amendment was described by one defence lawyer as "a life saver." "We would have lost the case completely if the People's Assembly had rejected this amendment," he said.

It was this last-minute rescue which provoked El-Badri to open fire at the Abu Zeid defence team, accusing them of "manoeuvring for months and delaying the case so that they can push the government to issue this law, tailored for Abu Zeid."

El-Badri, however, will not give up. After filing numerous lawsuits against various intellectuals and accusing them of "of-

fending" Islam, El-Badri has gained enough legal experience in actions of this kind.

The law on *hebsa* passed by the People's Assembly this January denies individuals the right to file lawsuits related to personal status affairs on the basis of *hebsa*. The law states that "anyone wanting to initiate legal action should file a complaint with the competent prosecution department. The prosecution authorities, after hearing the testimony of the concerned parties and conducting the necessary investigation should decide whether to file a lawsuit with the competent court of first instance or shelve the complaint". The new law gives the attorney general the final say.

However, the new *hebsa* law applied only to personal status lawsuits which were still before the court. A decision had already been made on the Abu Zeid case, with the Appeals Court ordering his divorce in June 1995.

"So, when the Abu Zeid case escaped the *hebsa* law, a new amendment was designed especially for him," argued El-Badri. "How can the law be changed to usurp individuals' ability to practise their Islamic rights? The Prophet Mohamed gave in-

dividuals the right to object and now they are issuing laws that do not comply with *shari'a*," Badri added that he would demand the "complete referral" of the case to the Supreme Constitutional Court.

"The law is on our side, and so is the prosecutor general," countered Abdel-Wahed. He denies El-Badri's claim that the defence team had lobbied for the amendment. "We were as surprised as he was, but ours was a happy surprise," he said.

The amendment faced opposition on different grounds from Nasserist and leftist deputies in the People's Assembly.

El-Badri Farhali, a Port Said deputy from the leftist Tagammu Party, said the amendment was not sufficiently clear. "Is it aimed at protecting the [freedom of] Egyptian mind... or is it aimed at restricting the filing of cases on public issues?" he asked.

Tagammu, he emphasised, approved the amendment if it was applied to the former case. "But we reject this law if the government aims to lump both categories together."

Sameh Ashour, a Nasserite MP, expressed a similar viewpoint, objecting to

the amendment's application to all legal cases, in any kind of court. "When we speak about a law that widens opportunities for creativity, we should not open some doors and close others," he said. Government lawyers, he argued, would use the amendment "to terminate a large number of cases pending in court against the sale of public sector assets."

Legal experts, on the other hand, welcomed the Article Three amendment on the grounds that it complemented the provisions of the *hebsa* law. "The *hebsa* law was confined to personal status cases, but this amendment extends to all civil cases," explained Ibrahim El-Nimiki, deputy chairman of the People's Assembly's Constitutional and Legislative Committee.

Clearly, the law is now on Abu Zeid's side, but his lawyers will not relax until the case is finally cancelled. "The likes of El-Badri will be looking for a legal loophole," said a member of his defence team. As Abu Zeid awaits the verdict of the Court of Cassation, one thing is certain: El-Badri and his Islamist colleagues will explore every legal means to ensure that the divorce decision stands.

## Police maintains anti-militants' offensive

Continuing their crackdown on Islamist militants in Upper Egypt, police arrested suspected militants from two groups, Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, responsible for most of the anti-government violence over the past four years, and Al-Shawqiyyun, an offshoot of the Gama'a, said to be responsible for robberies, killings and other terrorist activities. Two militants, one from each group, have also been killed in shootouts at militant hideouts.

Police shot dead Mahmoud Ibrahim Ahmed, a leading member of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, early this week. According to an Interior Ministry statement, Ahmed was killed in an exchange of fire with police following a raid on his hideout in hills in Sohag Governorate, 500km south of Cairo.

Security forces seized an automatic weapon which belonged to a police officer whom Ahmed is alleged to have killed in the nearby Qena province a year ago. Other evidence found in the hideout proves that Al-Gama'a was planning more attacks in Sohag against government installations and top security officials, the ministry statement said.

Besides the killing of the police officer in Qena, Ahmed is also believed to be responsible for shooting dead two other police officers in Assiut and a police guard in a Sohag village earlier this year.

Ahmed's killing came shortly after police carried out a major sweep against members of Al-Gama'a in the governorates of Alexandria, Suez, Marsa Matruh and Beheira, arresting 33 people.

It is claimed that they were led by three jailed Gama'a members, and had carried out several terrorist attacks on their instruction. Among those arrested was Said Ibrahim Abdel-Aziz Bakr who, according to another Interior Ministry statement, served as a liaison between the imprisoned leaders

The recent killing of two leading Islamist militants and the arrest of 47 others dealt another blow to armed underground groups, reports Jallan Halawi

and the Gama'a members on the outside. A top security official told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the recent attempts by militants to rob banks in Upper Egypt proved that the police had managed to throttle the flow of finances coming to the Gama'a from abroad. The official said more than LE1 million had been confiscated before reaching militant groups.

"By tightening the noose around these groups, they ran out of money and weapons. So they resorted to attacking police stations to steal weapons and banks in order to get cash," the official said. He admitted that the tight security presence in banks in the southern governorates had encouraged the attacks.

He added that the continual raids and clampdowns on militant hideouts had prevented them from recruiting new members or forming new cells. "We have managed to abort several terrorist attacks in advance," the official said.

Police have also acted against members of Al-Shawqiyyun, announcing early this week that they had arrested Abdel-Ghaffar Ibrahim in Cairo. Ibrahim had been on the run from a five-year sentence for his involvement in an armed robbery on a Cairo jewellery store in 1991.

Police also shot dead Qorani Abdel-Hamid, a leading member of Al-Shawqiyyun, in an exchange of fire, and arrested 13 of his aides. The gun battle between police and the militants began after security forces raided

their hideout in El-Marg, in northeast Cairo.

Abdel-Hamid was on the run from three prison sentences totalling 45 years for his involvement in armed robbery and the killing of four policemen in 1993.

Abdel-Hamid's partner, Mukhtar Ibrahim Abdel-Razik, described by security sources as a "dangerous" member of Al-Shawqiyyun, was also arrested in the same incident.

During interrogation Abdel-Razik confessed that he and Abdel-Hamid had formed a number of terrorist cells, whose members had planned to kill public figures, including police officers, artists, journalists and judges, and to bomb several banks and buildings frequented by tourists.

Abdel-Razik, who had eluded the police during three raids, was wanted for bombing a church and killing a policeman in the southern oasis of Fayoum in 1990, and for robbing jewellery stores in central Cairo in 1992 and 1993.

Al-Shawqiyyun was established in Fayoum Governorate, 80km south of Cairo, by Shawqi El-Sheikh in 1988. El-Sheikh had previously been one of the closest aides of blind sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, the spiritual leader of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, now serving a life sentence in New York. However, the two differed over theological matters, and El-Sheikh formed a splinter group called Al-Muslimin (The Muslims), who became known to police as Al-Shawqiyyun (Followers of Shawqi). According to police sources, El-Sheikh was later killed as a result of an internal split.

Al-Shawqiyyun began their activities in the small villages and hamlets of Fayoum, robbing jewellery shops and banks. They later shifted their activities to Cairo, Giza and Qalyubia governorates, carrying out a series of killings and other terrorist activities.

## Queen saved

A RARE Pharaonic statue of Queen Hatshepsut which had been stolen from Luxor was restored to its site this week, following efforts by the Antiquities Police and the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), reports Manal El-Ghamri

According to police, a man who claimed he was the chief inspector of antiquities in Aswan tried to sell the statue for LE5 million to a Cairo dealer. But the dealer informed the police and the man, whose name has not been released, was arrested. Experts said the statue's importance lies in the fact that most of Hatshepsut's statues and temples were destroyed by her stepson, Tootmos III, after he ascended the throne.

Hatshepsut, who lived in the 18th Dynasty, was the first queen to rule Egypt. After the death of her husband, Hatshepsut imprisoned her stepson for five years and took over the throne herself. Perhaps her greatest achievement was increasing Egypt's prosperity by extending its commercial ties to other countries, including the regions now known as Somalia and Lebanon.

A specialist committee of experts from the SCA described the statue as priceless, and said that its value on the market would probably be in excess of \$150 million.

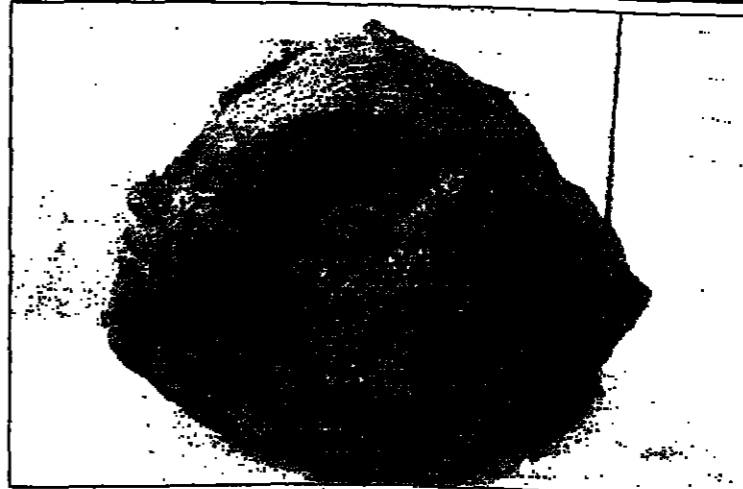
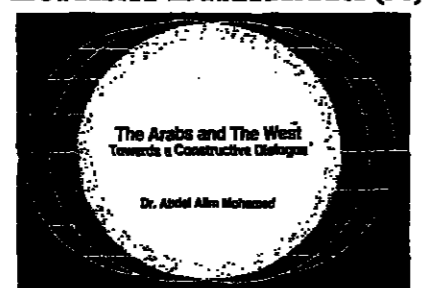


photo: Ennad Abdel-Hadi

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# Gaddafi scorns the West

In a high profile visit, Libya's revolutionary leader Muammar Gaddafi took the opportunity to lash out against the West. Nevine Khalil followed the five-day visit

During one of his longest visits to Egypt, Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi met several times with President Hosni Mubarak, lectured at Cairo University, spoke to businessmen, parliamentarians, intellectuals and visited an industrial city. He finally held a press conference with Mubarak yesterday. At all stops he stressed the importance of Arab unity and fiercely attacked the US, Britain and Israel, which were the butt of his many jokes.

Gaddafi and his 40-vehicle entourage made the trip by land to the border town of Salloum on Friday, since his country is under an air embargo. The embargo was imposed in 1992 when Tripoli refused to hand over two Libyans accused of bombing an American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, killing 270 people. Libya said it was only willing to hand the suspects over to a neutral body like the World Court at the Hague, to ensure a fair trial for its citizens.

At the joint press conference with Mubarak, the colonel suggested that solving the Lockerbie crisis by accepting the Libyan proposal could be used as a "winning card" for any of the candidates in coming US presidential elections. "If the suspects are tried, the truth revealed and compensation paid out, the nominee will take credit for settling the issue in a peaceful way," Gaddafi said. Mubarak, however, said that the crisis will only be resolved after the US elections in November.

Over the years the colonel has been at the receiving end of Western military, economic and political hostilities. He is currently frustrated by the United Nations embargo and the looming threat of US military action.

Washington recently threatened military action against a suspected chemical weapons plant at Tadmura, which Libya says is a factory for irrigation

material. The issue was raised during US Defence Secretary William Perry's visit to Cairo in April, but Mubarak demanded that the US produce material evidence against Tripoli before he would be convinced.

The photos provided, Gaddafi said in a speech over dinner with Mubarak, were counterfeits, concocted by the US. "America faked these photos and claimed they were of a chemical plant and were taken by satellite," Gaddafi said.

"Why didn't they go take pictures of Dimona or destroy it?", he asked, referring to Israel's nuclear reactor near the Egyptian border.

Gaddafi met with Mubarak six times since his arrival in Cairo on Saturday, discussing ways to defuse the crisis between Libya and the West, bilateral relations and the peace process.

The two leaders also discussed ways of achieving Arab reconciliation. Gaddafi's visit is the second in a series of summits

Mubarak is holding with Arab leaders in an attempt to pave the way for Arab reconciliation. The first was in mid-May with Jordan's King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. More mini-summits are expected in June and will include Syria's Hafez Al-Assad, Lebanon's Elias Hrawi, United Arab Emirates' Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan and Sultan Qaboos of Oman. Mubarak announced yesterday that Syria's Assad will come to Cairo soon, and it was reported that Oman's Sultan Qaboos will arrive on 10 June.

Mubarak declined an invitation to visit the US on 5 June because "I will be busy with the Arab leaders," he told *Al-Gomhouriya* newspaper in an interview published last week.

The colonel, author of the *Green Book* manifesto and a collection of short stories, also met with Egyptian intellectuals for over three hours on Tuesday. Earlier on Monday, Gaddafi met with a few

hundred students and academics from Cairo University for over two hours. Later he conferred with representatives of parliament for three hours. All meetings were attended by Osama El-Baz, Mubarak's political advisor.

Throughout, he told his audience he wanted feedback from them, which they were happy to provide, with much applause and laughter.

At Cairo University he spoke of "isolated, ignorant" Britons and "uneducated, stupid" Americans. He advised Mubarak to be wary of the US and Israel, who want to exhaust him by asking him to hold a series of summits, "like they did Gamal Abdel-Nasser", who died hours after an Arab summit in 1970. He added that the US and Israel want to "harm Egypt, the giant which makes [them] afraid."

Gaddafi reproached the Arabs for considering Peres a man of peace, in light of the Qana massacre which killed more than 100 civilians in Lebanon. "I wonder, if Peres was not so good-hearted, how many would he have killed? Thousands?" he asked an amused crowd. He said that if Arabs became a "giant like China" because of their sheer numbers, "the world would choose them and not Israel". He said that Arab unity was paramount "because without it we will be swallowed into the larger body".

He told the parliamentarians that Libya was willing to "further strengthen cooperation with Egypt, then Sudan, then all the Arab countries — for the sake of Arab unity."

Gaddafi met on Sunday with Egyptian businessmen to encourage economic cooperation between the two countries, and toured the industrial 10th of Ramadan City on Tuesday. Already, Egypt and Libya are involved in projects connecting their electricity and railway networks.

## Debating the choice of peace

In response to a series of dramatic events in the region: the latest Israeli aggression against Lebanon and the Qana massacre, the military agreement between Israel and Turkey, the re-emergence of a European role in peace talks, and the Israeli elections which took place yesterday, the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies and the Jordanian Centre for Strategic Studies joined forces to organise a seminar titled "Peace and Arab Future Options", held at Al-Ahram's offices in Cairo.

Over three days, participants from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon explored different perspectives of how peace could be achieved according to the positions of the concerned Arab governments involved in the process. Participants included diplomats, some of whom were mem-

bers of the negotiating teams in peace talks with Israel, professors of international law, economists, and political analysts.

The friendly atmosphere at the opening of the seminar, with delegates mixing and chatting together in the conference hall, was quickly dissipated as political differences, based more on nationality than ideology, came to the fore. On the second day, there was a clear division between countries which had signed peace treaties with Israel, Palestine and Jordan, and those which had not, Syria and Lebanon. The two sides sat apart and some bitter accusations were exchanged.

When the Syrian ambassador to Cairo, Eissa Darwish, was explaining his country's stand, criticising other Arab governments for seeking separate agreements with Israel, without coordinating with

Damascus, the Jordanians and Palestinians walked out. Jordanian participants were the most sensitive, to the degree that the speaker at one of the sessions asked them to calm down and not be so defensive.

"When we chose peace, it was a matter of strategy. But our concept of peace is that of a just and comprehensive peace, based mainly on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338," Darwish said.

He charged that Israel had resorted to signing peace agreements with Arab countries to wriggle out of abiding by international resolutions. "This was clearly seen last year when we resorted to the UN to compel Israel to suspend the confiscation of Arab land. But the US interfered and vetoed any decision against Israel," he added. However, Darwish underlined the

necessity of the active participation of the co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States and Russia. "Without the co-sponsors, the peace process will be nothing but Israeli blackmail," he declared.

According to Mowfiq Al-Afif, head of the Syrian negotiating team with Israel for two years, the Oslo agreements did not give Palestinians anything but bits and pieces of their rights. He asserted Syria's commitment to the Palestinian cause, saying that without finding a just solution for the Palestinian question, peace will not be achieved in the Middle East.

Lebanon's delegate to the seminar, George Deeb, won the hearts of the participants. In his opening speech, he insisted that negotiations, in the real sense, between Lebanon and Israel have not yet started: "The Lebanese refuse to

A group of Arab experts, meeting at Al-Ahram, agreed that peace was a strategic option for the region, although what has been achieved so far was nothing close to that goal. **Sherine Bahaa** reports

negotiate with those who are occupying their territories."

No one in the region denied the need for peace, Deeb continued, but he accused the United States of twisting the whole process in an attempt to ensure Israel's military superiority over the Arabs. "If we just monitor the events of the past few months, we will find a lot of examples: the strategic military agreement between Turkey and Israel, the Qana massacre, and the US coffers opened wide for Israel to obtain the latest military technology," he said.

Security, according to Israel's definition, has turned the lives of the Lebanese into a nightmare, Deeb continued. "The Lebanese are now suffering from two evils: their current bitter situation; peace talks with the occupiers and security arrangements."

For Moussa Berzeit, head of the Jordanian Strategic Centre, the fear of Israeli hegemony was an overriding factor for all the Arab countries concerned. "The peace process has failed to induce any real change in the strategic equation between the parties," he said. "Nevertheless, progress towards peace has gone hand in hand with a trend towards realism, which is reflected in the prevalent mood of depression among Arabs. Arabs are simply leading a life of fear of Israeli hegemony."

The Palestinians also expressed their dissatisfaction with what has been achieved on their own track. Mahdi Abdel-Hadi, a Palestinian professor of political science, said that the Israeli closure of the self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with all its political and economic repercussions, has

worsened Palestinians' living conditions to an unprecedented degree. Since the beginning of Palestinian self-rule in May 1994, Israel had sealed off the territories 17 times, for a total of 257 days.

Neither had the Israeli policy of confiscating Palestinian land stopped, Abdel-Hadi continued. Now land was being seized on the grounds that it was needed for building roads linking Israeli settlements, which have also increased by 10 per cent over the same period. Israel's oppressive measures had not been affected by the Oslo agreement, or the fact that the two sides should be now enjoying the fruits of peace, he said. In fact, Palestinians now feel more frustrated and their economic conditions have deteriorated further than in the days of direct Israeli occupation.

Coming soon after the Israeli onslaught on Lebanon, the sentencing this week of a retired NCO to life imprisonment with hard labour has added to the Egyptian public's mistrust of Israel and underlined the cold peace between the two countries. **Galal Nassar** reports on the trial and Egyptian security concerns, while **Mervat Diab** reviews the background to the case

## Spy sentenced to life

Abdel-Malek Ali Hamed, accused of spying for Israel, was sentenced last week, following a short military trial under tight security at the Military Courts Complex in Nasr City.

At the end of the court's fourth and last session, the chief military judge, whose name was not disclosed for security reasons, convicted Hamed, and sentenced him to life imprisonment with hard labour.

Hamed was accused of providing military information to Israel which threatened Egypt's political, economic and military situation and accepting a bribe, the Military Prosecutor-General said. Some of the information Hamed provided concerned the Shawa military base near his home village, Nawassa El-Gheit in the Nile Delta. Thousands of residents of this village have reportedly travelled to Israel over the past two years in search of work.

The military prosecutor had asked for the death penalty for Hamed, who was arrested 25 March, nearly three months after returning from training in the Israeli Red Sea port of Eilat. However, the court opted for a lesser sentence in consideration for Hamed's full confession. According to the military prosecutor, Hamed had been warned by the authorities about his frequent trips to Israel, particularly because of his background as

a former naval non-commissioned officer. At one time his passport had been confiscated, but Hamed obtained a false passport and went back again. He is said to have received \$2,000 from Israeli agents in exchange for information on military installations and other information of a political nature.

Hamed has acknowledged receiving money but claimed he had only accepted it to give himself time to contact Egyptian authorities. He did confess however to having provided Israeli intelligence with military and other information requested by them. During his interrogation, Hamed gave full details of the information he passed on to the Mossad.

The military court also fined Hamed LE6,735, the equivalent of \$2,000, the same amount he received from Israel. No journalists or members of Hamed's family were allowed to attend the trial due to the sensitive nature of the case and the military secrets disclosed during the proceedings.

In an interrogation lasting more than 20 days, Hamed, who was in the navy until his retirement in 1978, said he had originally gone to Israel looking for work. In Israel, he was recruited by Israeli intelligence officers and took training courses on using secret codes. He began to travel to Israel every two months, travelling through the Taba crossing point on

the border between Egypt and Israel.

The military prosecutor presented to the court Egyptian security reports on Hamed's movements during his last visit and tapped telephone call recordings, including conversations with Mossad officers. The same reports said that the Mossad had exploited Hamed's need for money after his losing a job in Libya. Shortly after being recruited, he was asked to provide some simple information from different Egyptian governorates; later he was asked for information on several military sites in Alexandria and Daqahliya governorates.

Egyptian intelligence sources told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that officers and experts

of the intelligence services had attended Hamed's interrogation by the state security and military prosecution departments in order to assess the importance of the information he had given to Israel, and to act to make this information redundant.

The Egyptian intelligence services are also intensifying their activities along the Egyptian-Israeli border areas and keeping a close eye on Egyptians who make frequent trips to Israel, the sources revealed. They are particularly concerned, they say, with the Mossad's tactic of ensnaring into its service Egyptian citizens who are driven by severe economic hardship to seek employment in Israel.

## Cold peace... spy wars

The sentencing last month of Amr Salmaan to life imprisonment for spying for Israel, and last Sunday of Abdel-Malek Hamed for the same charge compounded the doubts many Egyptians have come to harbour regarding the outcome of the nearly 17 years of peace between the two countries.

Spying, experts say, takes place even between friendly countries and at times of peace. But in the case of Egypt and Israel the situation might be a little different.

With the two countries maintaining what experts label a "cold peace", the latest spying cases came as a reminder to the public of the long years of animosity and war from 1948 until late President Anwar El-Sadat made his trip to Jerusalem in 1977, and fuelled further the anti-Israeli sentiments triggered by the latest Israeli onslaught in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the fact that the announcement of the arrests and the highly publicised trials coincided with ongoing issues of dispute between Egypt and Israel, has led some to question whether the trials are the latest move in an anti-Israeli campaign.

The dispute over the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty last year, confessions by Israeli army generals that they killed Egypt-

ian prisoners of war in 1956 and 1967, a fierce campaign in the Israeli press against Foreign Minister Amr Moussa calling for his removal, and the latest Israeli aggression against Lebanon were all reasons enough to justify the downturn in relations between the two countries.

But, according to Attorney General for State Security Hisham Saraya, the timing was purely coincidental, and unrelated to either country's hostile media coverage of the other. Saraya pointed out that although Salmaan was tried last month, he had actually been in jail for the past two years. Hamed, on the other hand, was arrested in late March.

Nevertheless, Ahmed Youssef, a professor of political science at Cairo University, warned that allowing Egyptians to work in Israel posed a particular security risk for Egypt as such workers are usually in dire financial need, and so make easy prey for recruitment by Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency.

Ambassador Mohamed El-Diwani, in charge of the Israeli section at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, completely rules out the possibility that the two men were pawns in an Egyptian campaign against Israel. He also denied a report published recently in a London-based magazine

claiming that Israel had kidnapped three Bedouins from Sinai accused of working for Egyptian intelligence. The two men at the centre of the latest spying cases hardly fit the popular conception of the highly-slicked secret agent. The first, Salmaan, is an illiterate worker at a primary school while the second, Hamed, is a retired non-commissioned naval officer with no education beyond the preparatory stage. Salmaan is a Bedouin from Sinai; Hamed lives in the village of Nawassa El-Gheit in the rural Daqahliya Governorate. Both men received training in Israel on gathering military intelligence.

Salmaan, 53, was recruited by Mossad as early as 1977. His brief was to provide information on the Egyptian military presence in Sinai. In 1982, Salmaan was arrested by Egyptian security when he tried to expand his activities, attempting to recruit a driver frequenting the road to the Egyptian military bases in north Sinai. Salmaan was detained for 16 months and then released for lack of sufficient evidence. He was then kept under strict surveillance until 1987, when he approached Mossad to resume his activities.

According to Salmaan's testimony, he received bonus payments in the form of heroin, which was transported across the border by Mossad agents. His last 'bonus' was a golden hand-

shake in the form of a 12kg packet of heroin, to mark the end of his service with Mossad. He confided to a supposed drug dealer in the area that he worked for Mossad and needed a hand to distribute this huge amount of drugs, with a street value of around LE12 million. The dealer was a security informant who immediately reported him to the police.

On the other hand, Hamed, 42, is the first known spy to have visited Israel with an official visa. According to Saraya, he had been to Israel several times to work in Eilat, after losing his previous job in Libya. Hamed, who first visited Israel in 1995, is one of 15,000 Egyptians who have been to Israel over the past two years, mainly on two-month tourist visas. During one of Hamed's visits, he was approached and recruited by Mossad and asked to provide information on naval troops in Egypt. He was later asked to report on a naval base near his home town. Egyptian security were alerted when one of his Israeli trips, part of his training programme, lasted for almost seven months. This was enough to have Hamed put under surveillance, and he was arrested in late April.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

## Peacetime spooks

AMIN Howaidy, former head of Egyptian intelligence and former defence minister, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that espionage activity between enemies was much the same as that between friends. Israel and its Arab neighbours will probably always spy on each other, and such activities "would not hurt the on-going peace process or the ties between Egypt and Israel".

He cited the case of Israel and the United States: the strong ties between Israel and the US had not stopped the former from recruiting American spies. The Japanese and Chinese, he said, were particularly well-known for economic spying, especially in the field of technology. Espionage has often given them the edge over other Asian, or even European, states.

According to Howaidy, espionage accounts for no more than three per cent of intelligence work. The remainder concerns the analysis of already-known information. It is then up to the counter-espionage section of an intelligence service to keep a close eye on how available material could be employed, Howaidy said.

He described the two recent incidents as classic cases. Military spying, he said, was hardly on the cutting edge of espionage these days, especially as Egypt and Israel both get their military equipment from the US. The most up-to-date spying involves technology and technological know-how, a field in which Israel has a great deal of experience, he said.

For Egyptians, involvement in espionage often means the death penalty. However, it is not a matter of routine; some of those convicted of spying are given prison sentences: "It all depends on the judge and the political circumstances."

# Rising hope for Gulf War claimants

Five years after the Gulf War, hundreds of thousands of Egyptian citizens may, by the end of the year, be able to collect on compensation claims submitted to the UNCC. Ghada Ragab and Mona El-Fiqi report

The Ministry of Manpower and Recruitment announced last week that the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), convened after the Gulf War to process and verify requests for damages, has approved the disbursement of funds to thousands of Egyptian who qualify for compensation under category A.

An oil-for-food agreement between Iraq and the United Nations, which allows Iraq to export oil in order to meet the humanitarian needs of its people, signaled fresh hope for thousands of claimants.

The Iraq-UN agreement allows Iraq to sell \$2 billion worth of oil every six months, out of which 30 per cent worth of the funds, or about \$600 million, will be channelled to the UNCC to pay off compensation damages.

According to UNCC Spokesman Walid Abdel-Nasser, this amount may increase after the first six months since the agreement gives the UN secretary-general the right to recommend to the Security Council an increase in the amount of oil to be exported to meet soaring

humanitarian needs in Iraq.

Abdel-Qader El-Assar, the ministry's consultant for international and technical cooperation said, "As soon as the ministry receives the funds from the UNCC, it will begin paying category A claimants."

El-Assar said that the total number of the Egyptian category A claims presented to the UNCC is 306,000, while category B claims amounted to 480. In category C, there are 100,000 claims submitted.

Concern over the fate of compensations has been mounting lately in Egypt, one of the countries most severely affected by the war ensuing from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Since the beginning of this year, Egypt has been a member of the UNCC's Governing Council. It is also the only member of the council to be referred to by the UN as the "most harshly hit by the Gulf War".

The UNCC's Governing Council has so far approved compensations worth some \$2.9 billion in three categories. These compensations

include all claims in category B, which relates to the deaths and injuries resulting from the invasion. Under this category, Egypt has already received \$1.3 million.

El-Assar said that since the ministry began to cash the compensations of category B, 324 claims had been paid while the rest have not been collected. He also added that according to the UNCC's instructions, the deadline for paying these claims is the end of June.

The Governing Council also approved about 80 per cent of category A claims, which includes all those forced to flee as a result of the war. Egypt has been awarded \$802 million for 292,000 claims under this category. Moreover, the council also approved the first instalment of category C claims, which covers the loss of property under \$100,000.

The council will meet from 28-30 May to approve compensations for the second instalment of category C. There are a total of 100,000 claims under this category, with 18,000 of them filed by Egyptian citizens. The secretariat of the UNCC is currently

processing claims for category D (loss of property over \$100,000), category E, which relates to companies that suffered commercial losses due to the invasion and Category F which pertains to governments and international organisations who wish to be compensated for expenses and losses incurred as a result of the invasion. These categories are expected to be completed by the end of this year.

The governing council will also approve the panels of commissioners recommended by the UN secretary-general to oversee these three categories.

Moreover, the UNCC is also looking into a consolidated claim; presented by the Egyptian government on behalf of workers who were working in Iraq when the war broke out and who have since been unable to cash their remittances, estimated at about \$500 million, from the branches of Iraqi banks in Egypt. According to Abdel-Nasser, the UNCC hopes to reach a settlement on this consolidated claim by early 1997.

## Public shuffle

PUBLIC Sector Minister Aref Ebeid, last week decided to replace the chairman of 8 of the nation's 17 holding companies — a move designed to improve the financial condition of public sector companies and speed up the privatisation process.

In the corporate reshuffling, Ahmed Mohamed El-Sayed replaced Mohamed Mahmoud Ali Hassan as chairman of the National Company for Construction and Urbanisation. Nabil El-Marsafawy replaced Ahmed Shuman as chairman of the Holding Company for Cotton and International Trade. Ahmed Abdel-Ghaffar was promoted from acting-chairman to chairman of the Textile and Trade Holding Company. Abdel-Hakim Haggag replaced Mohamed Mahmoud Ibrahim as chairman of the Holding Company for Spinning and Weaving and Ready-made Garments. Mohamed Mohieddin Abu-Alam replaced Abdel-Wahab El-Habak as chairman of the Engineering Industries Holding Company. Mohamed Sayed Dessouki took over for Mohamed Ahmed Adel Abdel-Karim as chairman of the Mining and Refractories Holding Company. Mohamed Adel El-Moaz replaced Taher Beshir as chairman of the Holding Company for Chemical Industries and Mohamed Kamal Ghonem filled the shoes of Ahmed Shamseddin Abdel-Hafez as chairman of the Holding Company for Rice and Flour Mills.

## Camdessus cameo

MICHEL Camdessus was last week selected to serve a third five-year term as Managing Director and Chairman of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Executive Board. The selection was made by the Executive Board, itself.

Camdessus is the seventh managing director of the fund. He first assumed the post in January 1987 after serving for a number of years as the governor of the Bank of France, director of the French Treasury, chairman of the Paris Club and chairman of the European Economic Community's Monetary Committee. He was also named France's governor of the IMF in 1984.

## FIC sale

FOR THE SECOND time in less than two weeks the Egyptian government sold the majority of its holdings in a public sector company, writes Sherene Abdel-Razek.

The High Ministerial Privatisation Committee decided last week to float 75 per cent of the shares of the Financial and Industrial Company (FIC). It had originally placed only 10 per cent of the shares up for public subscription.

The decision followed an unprecedented investor rush to purchase FIC's shares. The Holding Company for Mining and Refractories (HMR) has initially launched 325,000 shares for public subscription. The offering, managed by the National Bank of Egypt (NBE), was 100-times oversubscribed through the three-day subscription period.

Samir Morah, deputy managing-director of NBE's Investment Trustees Department, attributed this rush to the increased level of confidence on the part of small and foreign investors in the performance of the Egyptian market and the privatisation programme.

"We received purchase orders for 31 million shares," said Morah. "Subscribers included 31 foreign investment funds, 40 financial institutions and about 300,000 small investors."

As a result of the sale, the HMR's stake in the company will fall from 90 per cent to 15 per cent. The FIC Employee Shareholders Association already owns 10 per cent of the shares.

Subscribers were awarded a maximum of 100 shares each, with individuals cornering 1.66 million shares, and investment funds, 360,510 shares. The remaining shares went to financial institutions and banks.

FIC is a fertiliser manufacturing company. It has a paid-in capital of LE162 million and posted a pre-tax profit of LE15.5 million for the first half of fiscal 1995-96. Sales over the same period amounted to LE92 million.

The sale of FIC comes two weeks after the National Company for Construction and Urbanisation, a holding company, sold 65 per cent of its subsidiary, the Medinat Nasr Housing and Development Company, through the stock market.

## EFCC shuns Israel

THE EGYPTIAN Federation of Chambers of Commerce (EFCC) this week denied rumours that Egypt was party to a joint chamber of commerce with Israel.

Mahmoud El-Arabi, head of the EFCC, said he was surprised to receive an invitation from the Israeli Embassy requesting that the EFCC attend the inauguration of a joint Israeli-Egyptian chamber of commerce in Tel Aviv.

"There has not been, and there will not be, any cooperation between Israel and the EFCC," he said. "The EFCC, which represents nearly 3 million Egyptian businessmen, will not accept any commercial cooperation with Israel unless it terminates its terrorist attacks against the Arabs," stressed El-Arabi.

The EFCC is not alone in holding this position, he said. The Egyptian Federation of Industries shares the same attitude with regard to cooperating with Israel.

The EFCC also warned any Egyptian chamber of commerce or organisation against using its name in any dealings or cooperation with Israel. At the request of the EFCC, the Egyptian Embassy in Israel will investigate the matter in an effort to find out which party involved the EFCC in this situation.

## Indian visit

A 20-MAN Indian delegation representing the Chemicals Export Promotion Council of India (CHEMEXCIL) was in Cairo last week for a four-day visit. Members of the delegation included manufacturers and exporters of chemicals, drug and pharmaceutical dyes and dyestuff, agrochemicals, cosmetics and specialised chemicals.

During its stay, the delegation met with members of the Alexandria Businessmen Association (ABA) as well as with representatives of the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FOEI) and the Egyptian Businessmen's Association (EBA) to explore the possibility of boosting trade in their field.

## MedInterprise meeting

REPRESENTATIVES from over 130 Egyptian, European, Arab and Mediterranean electronics and information technology (IT) firms gathered in Cairo recently to attend the MedInterprise Egypt conference and exhibition. Niveen Wahish attended.

The event was a European Commission (EC) initiative designed to promote cooperation between small and medium-size enterprises in Europe and Mediterranean rim countries. This year, the EC initiative focused on the electronics and IT sector. According to the organisers of the three-day event, the fact that such a large number of electronics and IT firms decided to meet in Egypt suggests that the country's reputation as a centre for high-tech industry is growing. They also said that Egypt offers such firms tremendous opportunities as the country is both a target market and an avenue for investment. Other advantages include the significant tax and investment incentives offered which lure businesses, as well as Egypt's geographical proximity to Europe and Gulf Arab markets which make it a prime trading partner.

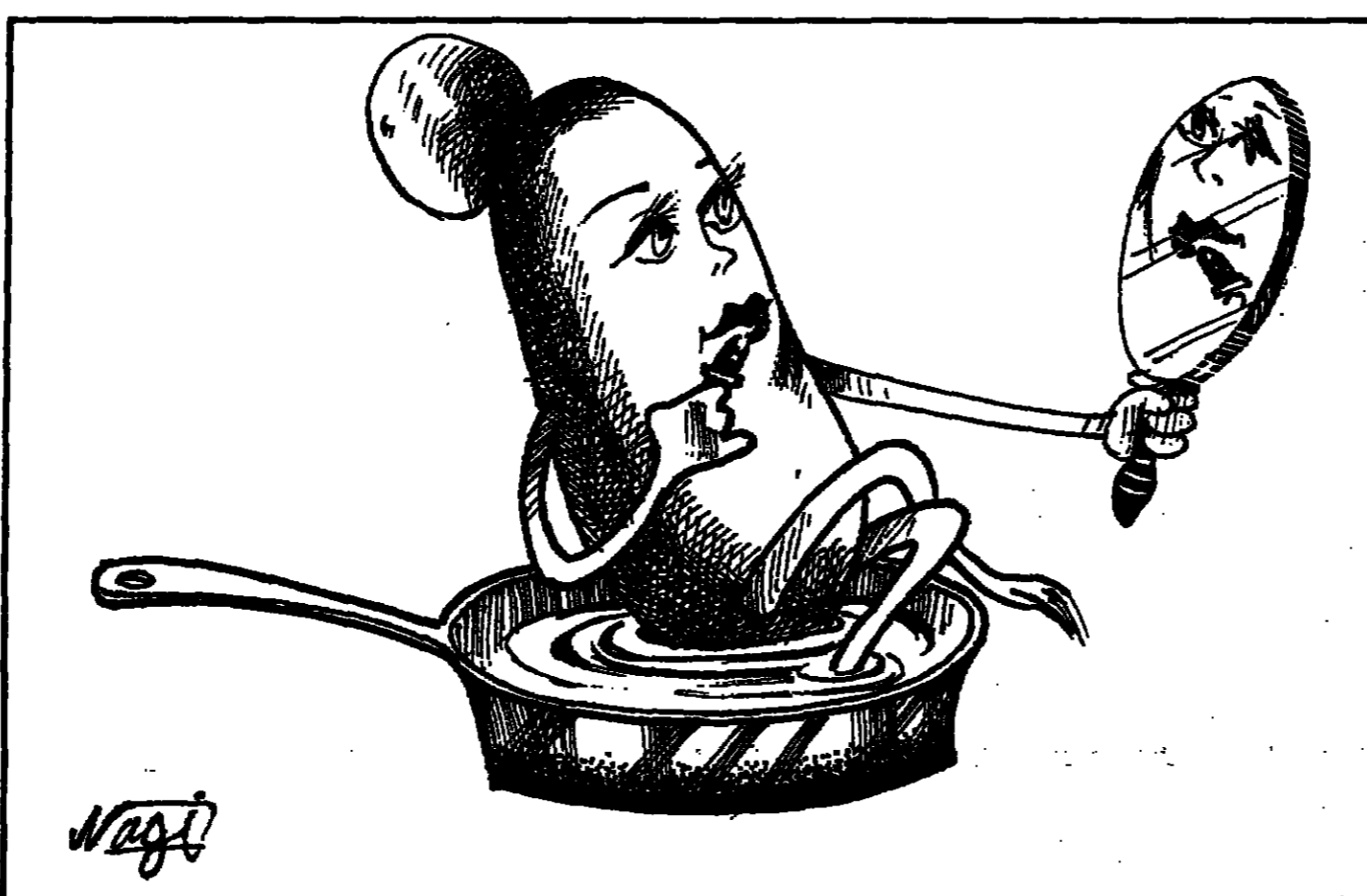
Francisco Aloisi de Lardere, Italy's ambassador to Egypt, said, while inaugurating the event, that the electronics and IT sector is a field with tremendous, rapid growth potential. The sector, he stated, has been given priority by both the EU and Egypt because of the role it plays in improving the efficiency of industry, business and agriculture. It is also a key factor in improving the health care and public administration systems. De Lardere also stressed that EU-Mediterranean cooperation in this field in particular helps promote the transfer of technology from EU member countries to those of the Mediterranean rim. This was one of the Barcelona Conference's goals. He added that MedInterprise is Egypt's chance to "showcase" all that is available in this country.

The event was organised by the German-Arab Chamber of Commerce (GACC), in cooperation with the European Commission, the Cabinet Information Decision and Support Centre (IDSC) and the Egyptian-European Association for Economic and Social Development.

MedInterprise is part of the Partnership European Union-Middle East business partnership programme which was held in Cairo in December 1994. The Partnership grouped representatives from roughly 1,000 private European and Middle Eastern companies for two days of intensive business meetings.

## Egyptian potatoes face EU heat

The European Union came short of banning the import of Egyptian potatoes. Niveen Wahish reports



Egyptian potato exports to the European Union (EU) are now subject to stricter inspection measures before being released for entry into EU member countries.

These new procedures are being adopted following a crisis which erupted when France, in late March, banned the entry of Egyptian potatoes because of their infestation with brown rot disease.

The new measures were recommended by the European Commission (EC), following a visit by an EC delegation to Cairo for talks with officials and potato producers early April.

The decision, issued on 8 May, went into effect as soon as EU member countries and the Egyptian Embassy in Brussels were notified.

Giving an example of the new procedures, Torben Holtze, the EC counsellor in Cairo responsible for Agriculture and Development Affairs, said that in the future, the exported potatoes must come from areas where the brown rot is not known to occur. Accordingly, each potato consignment will be labelled with the same code number as that of the plot of land from which it originated.

Moreover, the EU has specified certain ports which are allowed to receive Egyptian potatoes. Even then, EU health authorities will have to be

notified of the arrival of the potato shipment. The advance notice is imperative so that preparations for thorough inspections can be made.

The EC is being strict with regard to inspections because it is trying to eliminate the disease. "Any country where the disease is discovered, including member countries, is subject to these procedures," Holtze said. These measures, he said, are not discriminatory. "The complaint that EU members want to protect their potato producers is unsubstantiated. Egyptian potatoes are only allowed tariff-free entry during the winter when the Europeans are not producing in the first place," stated Holtze.

In the meantime, Holtze said, that the situation will be reviewed again in November 1996. The delegation which visited Egypt in April, he said, came to discuss with Egyptian officials the measures implemented to curb the spread of brown rot. "This is in Egypt's interest, since the European consumers, in the long run, will only accept quality goods," Holtze noted.

Some measures have been taken but they do not appear to be enough. "A better monitoring system to guarantee that potatoes are free of the disease is needed," Holtze said.

In Europe, when the disease is discovered in a

plot of land, the area is not seeded for five years. "Egypt has not yet introduced this restriction period," he stated.

The measures suggested by the EU were designed to improve Egyptian potato exports to the EU. Among these suggestions was that Egypt shift to new desert lands which are disease-free, especially since the sandy soil is better for potatoes.

He said that an increase in brown rot infestation reports this year may have been a result of the increase in Egyptian potato exports. Consequently, the number of infested consignments could have increased as well. "In the past there were not so many [consignments]. This year, exports have almost doubled which may explain why the number of brown rot incidents has increased," he said.

He added, "Inspecting the potatoes is [primarily] Egypt's responsibility." If European importers continue to receive infested consignments, he explained, they may start believing that the quality of Egyptian potatoes is not up to standard, and will look to others for the imports.

Meanwhile, David Appia, the French Embassy's economic and commercial counsellor, said that France will comply with the EC's decision. "We do not have a different approach," he stated.

## Market report

### The seventh sign

FOR the seventh consecutive week, the Egyptian Stock Exchange was on the upswing, with the General Market Index gaining 2.25 points to settle at 204.85 for the week ending 23 May. Trading, however, remained slow, with only LE39.7 million in shares changing hands. Market experts attributed this to investors waiting for new issues rather than purchasing existing shares.

The index for the manufacturing sector gained 0.81 to level off at 266.62 points as shares of the Amoun Pharmaceuticals Company gained LE39 to close at LE160. Also fueling the index's increase was trading of Cairo Light Industries Company's shares, which jumped by LE22 to close at LE380 per share. The Suez Cement Company shared the spotlight with the Middle Egypt Mills Company in terms of volume and value of trading. Roughly LE1.64 million in Suez Cement's shares changed hands, accounting for 11.79 per cent of total market activity. Despite heavy trading, however, the value of the shares fell by LE0.92 to close at LE41.78. Shares of the Middle

Egypt Mills Company dominated the market in terms of volume of trading. Approximately 154,370 shares of the company changed hands, accounting for 18.31 per cent of total transactions. Their value

share to close at LE76.

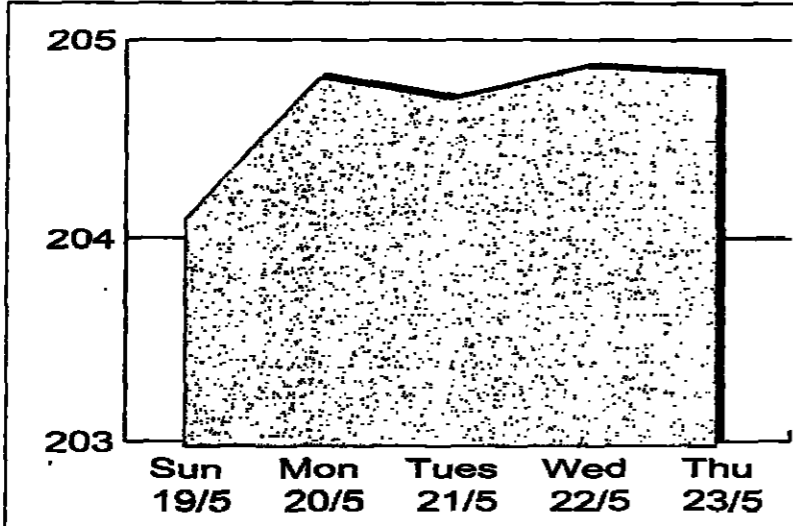
Also witnessing an increase, the index for the financial sector gained 0.17 points to close at 205.44. Among the companies to register an increase in their share value was the

Societe Generale Bank whose shares jumped by LE25.05 to close at LE351.05.

The newly-privatised Medinat Nasr Housing and Development Company's shares steadily climbed to LE77.8. The week before, they stood at LE73. On the flip side, shares of the Egyptian Expatriates Investment and Development Company were hardest hit, losing 13.02 per cent of their value to close at LE14.83. Shares of the Alexandria Commercial and Marine Bank lost

LE6.25 to level off at LE44.5. Analysts expect that the government's decision to lift the capital gains tax on the sale of shares to energise the market over the next few weeks. They also believe that the market will receive an additional boost from the recent Alexandria Pharmaceuticals Company and the South Cairo Mills share offerings.

Edited by Ghada Ragab



## Lisez dans

### Entretiens exclusifs

Pères : Les Israéliens sont divisés sur Jérusalem

Netanyahou : Nous ne descendrons pas du Golan

### Restauration

Le sort de l'Eglise suspendue

Accord Bagdad-Onu

Les marchés pétroliers attentistes

### Samir

Voyage dans un magazine pour enfants

### Enquête

La Palestine attend les aides promises

Rédacteur en Chef

Exécutif

Mohamed Salmawy

Président

et Rédacteur en Chef

Ibrahim Nafie

# Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

On the morning of 23 July, 1891, *Al-Ahram's* Cairo correspondent hastened off his dispatch to the newspaper's headquarters in Alexandria — at dawn that same morning a fire broke out in Abdin Palace. The khedive and the other members of the royal family, as was their custom every summer, were in Alexandria at the time.

But aside from the symbolic importance that the fire broke out in a place which doubles as the royal residence and the centre of government, it also marked an important turning point in the history of fire-fighting in Egypt. It represented a transition from a system characterised by the frantic round up of water-carriers and spontaneous acts of individual heroism to an organised, trained and equipped fire-department. It is also one more example of the modernisation the country had taken in the latter half of the 19th century.

Given the importance of the "Fire in the Palace of Our Prince" to this transition, it seems appropriate to follow the events. The Cairo correspondent's report appeared in the following day's edition of *Al-Ahram*.

"The fire broke out in the eastern section of the palace near one of the kitchens in the private wing. The servants and employees of the court sounded the alarm and tried to put the fire out. However, when it began to burn out of control, they notified the governors office, which subsequently dispatched horse-driven carts with water pumps. As a result of the intense efforts of all, the fire was extinguished at its source in less than an hour."

But as the fire-fighters were preparing to leave, thinking they had accomplished their task, "another fire broke out in an adjacent room. Suddenly the flames struck a gas-pipe which ignited causing an explosion, the flames from which were impossible to extinguish."

When the palace attendants and the men from the governorate realised the task was beyond them, they knew they had to summon other forces. Consequently, "officers of the British and Egyptian armies and hundreds of soldiers from both forces poured into the palace grounds, bringing with them water carts, street spraying carts and pumps."

One thing for certain was that, in spite of the size of the force, they were not a professional fire-fighting brigade. Indeed we have in the correspondent's account an almost slapstick portrait of confusion, in spite of the gravity of the incident.

"Government officials, including ministers, deputy ministers, department heads and even retired officials pitched in, with unmatched zeal and ardor, to combat the flames. This correspondent personally saw the honourable Abdel-Rahman Rushdi, the minister of finance, Zaki Pasha, the minister of public works, Fakhri Pasha, the minister of justice, Youssef Pasha Shakhri, minister of war, Talaat Pasha, minister of foreign affairs, Ahmed Pasha Shukri, deputy minister of the interior and Kitchener Pasha, engaged in the effort with the same drive and energy as the workers. They entered the rooms adjacent to the fire, shouted orders at the soldiers and monitored every step of the operation."

Throughout this melee, the fire spread relentlessly. The British and Egyptian officers resolved to formulate a plan to save what they could, first by removing as much of the furnishings of the palace as possible. "They feared for the fate of the luxurious furniture, the precious carpets, chandeliers, chairs and beds. Orders were therefore given to transport these items to the outer courtyard. Unfortunately, as the soldiers moved the items, some were broken, some were too heavy to move, and others were simply thrown out of the windows and smashed to pieces on the ground."

Soon the fire began to consume the surrounding buildings and "it became apparent to all that the fire in the eastern wing threatened to spread to the quarters of the palace retinue and to the quarters of the harem." They then decided to proceed to stage two of the opera-

tion — dynamite. The soldiers blew up two large rooms and several offices, "in order to create a gap between the fire and the retinue quarters. As a result, the fire was confined to the eastern wing where it was quelled by jets of water poured on it from every direction. The remainder of the palace, two-thirds of the entire edifice, was spared. May God be praised and may he compensate the government and the khedive many times over for the loss."

With this appeal, *Al-Ahram's* correspondent concludes his account. However, it was only the opening chapter of a more comprehensive story.

In the wake of the incident, reactions ensued in quick succession. The khedive expressed his gratitude to all those who participated in fighting the fire, with special mention going to Kitchener, the commander-general of the armed forces. Shawqi Pasha, the director of the royal court, was also singled out by name "for his zeal and efforts in extinguishing the fire." However, in his case it was by the Nice-based Societe de Charite Supérieure de Secours which decided "to confer upon Shawqi Pasha the Medal of the Chevaliers Sauveteurs of the First Order and to record this in the gold embossed book in which the society records all of its activities."

The Khedive also sent his son, Abbas, to inspect the palace. Abbas discovered that the damage was so extensive that it would be impossible to reside in it for at least four months. This estimate was, as *Al-Ahram* revealed in its 31 August issue, very optimistic.

"Work is proceeding apace in Abdin Palace. It is hoped that the khedive's private reception room will be completed by the first week of November. As for the harem quarters, it is not expected that they will be completed before the first month of the new year, at which point His Royal Highness and the court will take up residence again." Elsewhere in the same edition, *Al-Ahram* informed its readers that during the restoration process, the palace will be fitted out with electric lighting, "the safety and beauty of which all are aware."

Of particular note in the aftermath of the fire is the discovery that the palace was insured. *Al-Ahram* reported that, "Work on the reconstruction of Abdin Palace will be completed in early October, at which point the khedive will be able to resume residence there. Sources say that the palace is insured for 300,000 pounds by Sphinx, a British insurance company." It is interesting that the concept of property insurance was already entrenched in Egypt at that early date, at least among the Egyptian upper class and the wealthy Europeans. The involvement of the insurance company also assures that the fire in the royal palace was no ordinary incident, concerned as such companies are with determining the precise causes. It would be useful at this juncture to assume the insurance agent's perspective and examine some of the common causes of fire in Egypt.

In rural Egypt one common cause of fire was the arson of other farmers' fields. *Al-Ahram's* correspondent reported on one such case in which the damage was quite extensive. The victim was Abdallah Pasha Ezzat El-Arna'at near Al-Tawfiqiya. "One hundred feddans of wheat were destroyed in addition to several homes on the plantation. The fire claimed the life of a woman and resulted in more than 1,000 pounds in damage. The mayor [of Dammanhur] launched a wide-scale search for the arsonists. It was discovered that they were four workers on the plantation who, after being apprehended, confessed to their crime. After the mayor wrote the official report, the commissioner of police came to take the culprits into custody. We petition the government to hand down to them the harshest penalties."

A more common cause of fire was the villagers' custom of storing kindling on top of their houses. This was the story from Mit Ghamr in May 1894 where "police were able to contain the flames which destroyed only two of the house's rooms, although the following

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Tragedy has an obvious way of drawing attention to inadequacies. But solutions are often only attainable when the wheels of technology and modernisation are turning. Such was the case with the development of a modern fire-fighting system in Egypt. Dr Yunan Labib Rizq, turning the pages of *Al-Ahram* in the last century, traces the evolution of the Egyptian fire department



day a similar fire broke out in another house." In April 1895 a more serious incident took place. "The fire lasted for six hours, destroyed 30 houses and killed six women. It also took the life of a village patrol guard who, in the course of trying to save a woman's life, valiantly climbed to the roof of her home in order to throw the burning kindling off the roof. He however lost his balance and fell into the fire."

So frequent were such reports that *Al-Ahram* appealed "to those in charge to put an end to the villagers' custom of storing kindling on their rooftops, and to penalise all offenders." And, indeed, on 21 August, 1895, the Ministry of Interior responded to the appeal and issued decrees "to the people of the governorates of Giza, Gharbiya and Menufiya, prohibiting them from placing kindling and other combustible materials on the roofs of their homes." The decree apparently extended to other governorates as well. In October 1895, *Al-Ahram* reported that "villagers from Muaysara were issued a summons to appear in court on 28 October 1895 to hear the verdict against them for violating the law prohibiting the storage of kindling on their roofs."

Fires also broke out during festive occasions. Celebrations of the famous Moulid (anniversary) of El-Sayyid Bedawi in Tanta were interrupted when, as *Al-Ahram* reported, "a great fire broke out at one o'clock yesterday afternoon in the herbs and spices agency, near the Tomb of El-Sayyid Bedawi." The value of goods lost to the flames was estimated at 5,000 pounds. We have learned that the proprietors of stalls in the agency store kerosene containers and other combustibles in places where they could be exposed to the flames."

What these stories reveal is that the transition from traditional fire-fighting means to the more organised participation of government was already in progress. If at first this shift was only limited in scope, several news items suggest that it was expanding.

In Beni Suef "a fire broke out in Wana Al-Qass. The deputy mayor hastened to the scene, bringing with him the pump, members of the fire brigade and the water-carriers. After considerable efforts, they were able to quell the flames, but not before the fire had destroyed 20 homes and 60 silos, may God recompense their owners."

In response to a fire that broke out in the provincial

capital of Shabin Al-Kom, "the police commissioner and the fire brigade hastened to the scene with two pumps and a large number of water-carriers. With considerable zeal, they managed to quell the flames in a short period of time."

In Kamshish in Menufiya, a fire spread to more than 300 homes. "A telegram was dispatched to the relevant authorities, in response to which the Menufiya and Gharbiya police forces, a doctor and a number of water-carriers hastened to the village. After a great deal of trouble, and with the assistance of the mayors of the neighbouring villages, they managed to extinguish the flames. So far, 16 people have died from the fire and the losses are estimated at 20,000 pounds."

Although *Al-Ahram*, as we have seen, was quick to praise the contributions of governmental authorities in these instances, these same officials were not beyond criticism. The correspondent who reported on a fire in Mit Ghamr, for example, remarked, "There is no decent fire pump in the entire village. The one we have is useless, spraying no more than 20 cubic metres of water and then only reaching a maximum height of four metres." The correspondent from Menuf also lodged a complaint. "There are no fire extinguishers to speak of in this provincial capital. The one that does exist is very old, and even if it were new it would not be sufficient for a village of this size."

If these types of fire were common in rural Egypt, the major urban centres of Cairo and Alexandria were victimised by fires resulting from the economic developments which characterised that era, such as the export of cotton, the increase in the number of public bakeries and the increased use of the cotton press. In December 1896, two incidents are reported in quick succession. The first reads, "A fire erupted in the port warehouse of Mr Varver and was extinguished only after the flames consumed several bales of cotton." The second read, "Yesterday morning a fire erupted in the warehouse of Naggar, Gohar and Co. The warehouse contained 240 bales of cotton, of which 150 bales, valued at 800 pounds, were consumed by the flames."

Nevertheless, the development of a modern, organised fire-fighting system proceeded at a quicker pace in the cities than in the rural areas. In the wake of the fire in Abdin Palace, "the government appointed a team of fire-fighters to be stationed at the fire pumps in Al-

Manshiya, and to be ready at all times to extinguish fires as soon as they erupt," reports *Al-Ahram*.

Also, in 1891, the newspaper reported, "the illustrious Muckler Co. has invented a new design for fire extinguishers. A committee was formed under the chairmanship of the police commissioner of Alexandria, Mr Harvey, to inspect the new pump. After testing it in one of the police stables, the committee expressed their approval of the new device because it is easy to operate."

This interest in updating the equipment did not stop there. On 24 September, 1896, we learn that "the Alexandria commissioner of police went to the new warehouses in the port customs area in order to attend the testing of a special fire-fighting pump that has been installed. The testing of the device was very successful."

It was not long before the new equipment would prove useful. On 18 February, 1898, *Al-Ahram* reported that "a large fire broke out at seven in the morning in Mr Carver's warehouse, which is adjacent to Mr Gionni Satti's wood warehouse. The fire brigade, headed by the vigilant police commissioner of Alexandria, Mr Harrington, hastened to the scene. In spite of their efforts and [the use of] 11 fire pumps, the fire increased in intensity. Therefore, in order to prevent the flames from spreading to the neighbouring warehouses, Mr Harrington ordered that some of the pumps be directed at these warehouses while the remainder be used to contain the fire."

It is interesting to note in the previous article the presence of a fledgling fire department. Moreover, in line with these developments in the modernisation of techniques and equipment, there emerged new fire-prevention codes and better organisation.

One law which appeared in the 1890s prohibited "the storing of flammable materials in warehouses and residential neighbourhoods for fear of the damage they could cause in the event of a fire." Another move was to relocate kerosene tanks away from the main thoroughfares, "due to the potential damage they could cause." Also, by 1898, both Cairo and Alexandria established a permanent fire-fighting brigade. In addition, the city of Alexandria installed 11 fire hydrants and equipped its brigade with two new pumps.

Another development was in the field of treating the victims and providing compensation for the damage. As stated earlier in this article, insurance firms were already in operation in Egypt. *Al-Ahram* contained several other references to the fact that victims of fire had their property insured. In general, they were foreigners, such as the owners of the aforementioned warehouses. Naggar and Gohar for example were insured by a British insurance firm, and Carver, who lost 300,000 pounds worth of cotton was fully compensated for his losses.

Our final words should be spared for the victims. Relief generally took the form of private donations and charity benefits since the government did little more than hand out bread crumbs. In May 1895 *Al-Ahram* reported on a catastrophic fire in Sanuris that destroyed 68 homes and 12 shops. The article concluded by saying, "The tragedy stirred the compassion and benevolence in the hearts of the people, foremost among whom was the honourable Fanous Effendi Hana, who organised a campaign to collect donations and provisions to be distributed among the ill-fated victims of the flames." In June, the newspaper reported that Iskander Effendi Farah travelled with his theatre troupe to Port Said in order "to present a play, the proceeds of which will go to the victims of the fire in Hayy Al-Arab. The circus theatre was filled to capacity."

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.



## Ph.D. thesis on central bank

IN THE Faculty of Commerce, Alexandria University, a PhD defence on the role of the Central Bank in achieving monetary stabilisation in Egypt will take place on 13 June. The thesis committee is comprised of Subhi Tarus, economic professor and head of the committee, with Abdel-Rahman Youssri, head of the Economics Department, Ali Negm, board chairman of Delta International Bank and former governor of the Central Bank as members of the committee.

## MONEY & BUSINESS



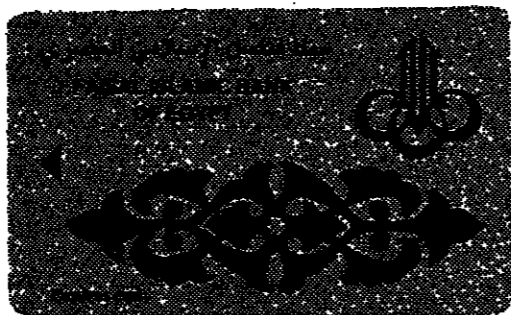
## Trade minister to open transportation fair

AHMED Guwelli, minister of trade, is scheduled to open the Cairo International Transportation Fair. The one-week event comes within the framework of the International Authority for Fairs' strategy aimed at promoting domestic trade and boosting commercial ties with different countries of the world. The exhibition will display the latest trucks, jeeps, motorcycles, bikes and tyres. Other accessories will be on display, including automobile lamps, mirrors, clocks and alarm systems.

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## Structure of Indo-Egyptian trade

The major Indian exports to Egypt are chemicals and related products, textiles and textile articles, vegetable products, tea, mineral products and tobacco.

The main Egyptian exports to India are crude petroleum, raw cotton, chemicals, fertilisers, metal ores and scrap metal.

Recently, the Egyptian government has proposed to purchase up to half a million tons of wheat on a government-to-government basis from India, keeping in view the exportable surplus in India. In addition, many private importers are showing interest in importing wheat and wheat flour from India.

### Projects and joint ventures

The large contracts won by Indian companies during the last two years include a \$30mn repeat contract for supply of hot briquette iron (HBI) by ESSAR World Trade to National Iron and Steel Company of Egypt, a \$20mn contract for a supply of boilers by BHEL for the Al-Arish 2,300MW power project, an \$11mn contract for the supply of irrigation systems by Kirloskar Brothers, a \$13mn contract for the supply of overhead transmission towers by KEC for Egypt-Jordanian Transmission Line, a \$3.5mn contract by TATA Exports for the supply of television electronic components to Nasr

Television Company, and a consultancy contract project for 45 man-months by Dastur and Company for the Arab Special Steel Company.

An increasing number of Indian companies are looking at Egypt as a production base. Grasim Ltd. of India and Egyptian companies TRESCO and ATC have entered into a \$40mn joint venture for manufacturing carbon black in Egypt: ESSEL of India and Meshoor Pack of Egypt have established a joint venture for manufacturing laminated toothpaste tubes for use by Procter and Gamble in Egypt and neighbouring countries. Kirloskar Brothers have received approval for manufacturing diesel engines and irrigation pump sets in Egypt. TELCO has agreed to work with a local private sector company, Ghabbour Brothers, and a public sector company, ETAMCO, for assembling pickup trucks and mini-buses. Bajaj Auto and Bajaj Tempo have teamed up with El-Tramco for assembling two-wheelers and Matador vans respectively. Ballarpur Industries Ltd. are establishing a plant for manufacturing STPP, a detergent component. Oriental Fans will cooperate with Telemisr for the assembly of ceiling fans and Anubhav Plantation have agreed to establish a \$17mn joint venture for oil exploration in North Zafarana in the Red Sea. UTI has obtained approval for a joint venture company in mutual funds to be established in Egypt and SAIL has signed an

MOU for cooperation with MICOR, the Metallurgical Holding Company of Egypt. PAL is also planning to establish a project for the manufacturing of automobile lamps. Nile Tex is a 100 per cent Indian company manufacturing PVC water storage tanks.

### Visits by trade delegations

Following the opening up of the Egyptian markets, there has also been increased interaction between the business communities of the two sides.

During 1995 (1) A three-member delegation from State Government of Haryana Fisheries visited Egypt to see the development of fisheries from 2 to 4 March 1995. (2) A two-member delegation from the Tobacco Board visited Cairo during 25-26 June 1995 and met various tobacco dealers and importers. (3) A three-member delegation headed by Dr PK Roy, executive director SAIL, visited Egypt from 27 June to 4 July 1995 and signed an MOU with MICOR. (4) A two-member delegation from Rajasthan Mineral Development Corporation visited Egypt in connection with the upcoming Abu Tartour Phosphate project. (5) A three-member team of officials from the Social Fund for Development (SFD) visited India from 15 March 1995 under a study-visit programme of ITEC.

## Qualifying translators

TRANSLATION is a science, never so easy to perfect. It takes more than just memorisation; an understanding of both theory and practice is required. Beyond that, proficiency requires keeping up-to-date with the latest terminology in the languages the translator works in. The Center of Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) at the American University in Cairo meets these requirements. The curricula taught there were set by professional translators and linguists. The education focuses primarily on perfection of the linguistics of both the Arabic and English languages, and then the rules for translating from one language into the

other. The translation department also handles linguistic issues such as the sometimes puzzling Arabisation of foreign words and phrases. Special courses in UN terminology, journalistic language, linguistics and legal translation are also provided in order to prepare students as efficient simultaneous interpreters.

Abdel-Aziz Hamdi Ragab, assistant director of the Arabic and Translation Studies Department at CACE, said that finding graduates of the department in local and international conferences and in prestigious institutions lends credibility to the department's education policies.

## Nature's Best — naturally

THE FIRST health food shop in Egypt is opening its doors supplying health-conscious customers with Nature's Best, fresh from Sekem Farms.

All vegetables are grown organically without pesticides. So is the wheat and rye that goes in the farmer's bread, which is baked the traditional way in a wood-burning oven. The cheese and milk products are as natural as can be.

Even the textiles offered at Nature's Best are somewhat different. Not only is the cotton grown without chemicals, the whole processing of the cotton is done in an ecological manner, meeting the high standards of the European AKN natural textile regulations.

It's a good feeling to know that the cotton garment you wear on your skin has not been treated with all those common additives used nowadays. It is also said to be important for a baby's sensitive skin.

But you will find lots of other things at Nature's Best from Sekem Farms. There are herbal drinks and herbal remedies. You will find wooden toys and small cotton puppets designed to foster the fantasy of your children. You will find rugs and carpets.

Actually, it's best you go there to find out for yourself. The Sekem people even invite you to visit them on their farm.

Nature's Best, 29 Mustafa Kamil Street, Tawfik Tower near Road 9, Maadi.



The two contestants, Peres and Netanyahu meet their supporters on the last day of campaigning, while an old Israeli woman begs by a wall covered with posters reading "Forbidden to vote for Peres" (photos: Reuters & AP)

# Courting the disenfranchised

Arab voters and candidates in Israel fall into one of three electoral lists: Jewish, Arab or Arab-Jewish. But, according to analysts, the sizeable number of Arab voters, whether in Arab or Jewish parties, leads to a dispersion of Arab votes — the reason being that much of the Arab vote is distributed according to familial and tribal considerations.

Of the 441,598 eligible Arab voters, 85,000 are affiliated to Israeli Labour, Likud and Meretz parties. These parties, particularly Labour, present a serious challenge to the Arab parties that are vying for seats in the Knesset. Therefore, some Arab movements participating in the elections, such as the Progressive Confederation, harbour fears of being unable to achieve the 1.5 per cent threshold (45,000 votes) needed to win a seat in the Knesset. Other parties doubt that they will be able to win more than one seat. Accordingly, a fierce tug-of-war over the Arab vote is underway between the Arab and Jewish sides.

Arab voters, themselves, have been influenced by a number of recent developments, such as the participation of the Islamic movement and the Abna'a Al-Balad (Natives of the Country), and the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) presence in the West Bank and Gaza. Other strong contributing factors include Israel's recent "Grapes of Wrath" offensive against Lebanon, Labour Minister Yossi Beilin's call to resettle the Israeli Arabs in the Occupied Territories in exchange for Jewish settlers living in these same lands and, finally, the novelty of directly electing a prime minister. But topping the list of concerns for Arab voters and candidates are the future of the Arabs in Israel and the progress of the Palestinian-Israeli peace track within the context of the peace process.

Traditional Arab leaders, who rely on familial ties

Arab voters have become an increasingly important constituency capable, even, of deciding the next Israeli prime minister. Tarek Hassan reports from Nazareth on the breakdown of the Arab vote

and tribal allegiances, maintain that progress cannot be achieved except through the ruling parties in Israel. Others, however, believe that only a unified Arab list will be able to satisfy Arab demands. Expressing yet another opinion, the communists and their supporters assert that only a joint Arab-Jewish ticket could deliver the goods.

There are two main factors which govern the political perspective of Arabs in the 14th Knesset elections. The first factor relates to the issue of Palestine as a whole, while the second addresses the issues pertaining to Palestinian citizens of Israel. Topping the list here are the Palestinians' civil rights.

If these factors indeed play the leading role in deciding for whom Arab voters in Israel cast their ballots, then some obvious questions arise. First, what are their chances of influencing Israeli parties in a way that would enhance their position? Second, how much of a chance do Arab parties have in attracting Arab voters? And third, how can the joint Arab-Israeli ticket be best evaluated in terms of its performance?

Past Israeli elections reveal that there is a strong tendency towards the "Israelisation" of Arabs when it comes to voting. Approximately 52.4 per cent of the Arab votes went to Jewish parties in the last elections. However, in these elections, there is a call for the "Palestinianisation" of the Arab votes to be cast. This shift is primarily a result of the recent developments on both the Israeli domestic political arena and the emergence of a Palestinian entity in the self-rule

areas. Another contributing factor is the participation of the Islamic movement, with all its attendant political, cultural and ideological shades. In the Israeli elections, coupled with a call among Arabs for granting them a form of cultural autonomy within Israel.

In light of these issues, it is important to take note of the Arab achievements in the Knesset to date. They have succeeded in freezing the confiscation of Arab lands in Jerusalem and have mobilised support among the Palestinians and the Israelis for the peace process. These two victories, aided by the fact that a growing number of Israelis have accepted the need for establishing an independent Palestinian state, could be instrumental in helping the Arabs secure votes in the current elections.

Nonetheless, a stumbling block, in the form of a rift between competing Arab parties, exists. Three different lists are competing and, in so doing, are siphoning off votes from long-standing parties.

Arab voters are also important to both the Labour and Meretz parties, and have a strong voice in the Israeli Communist Party. But when it comes to Likud, however, their electoral representation is not equally matched by the party's attention to their needs and interests. Outside the mainstream parties, Arabs may cast their votes for smaller, Jewish right-wing parties only when it offers immediate, practical gains. But they are not represented by these parties.

In the run-up to these elections, however, it became evident that Israeli Arabs were showing little support for Mefdal, Shas, Likud or even Meretz. The dimin-

ishing support for the latter appears to be a result of the fact that there are no assured Arab winners on the Meretz ticket, even though the party supports the national rights of Palestinians. Dwindling Arab support for the right-wing parties, particularly Likud, is naturally due to the anti-peace policies espoused by these parties and the absence of any Arab candidates on their tickets.

The Labour Party, as a result of Beilin's transfer policy fumble, may find itself losing some Arab votes to the Arab parties, but not enough to make it easy sailing for their Arab challengers. On average, Labour's Arab constituency number 65,000, of which 15,000 are Druze. The Arab candidates on Labour's ticket are already assured of four seats in the coming Knesset, including a seat earmarked for a woman and one for a Druze. These four candidates even have priority over Oriental Jews and Russian immigrants. The only noticeable omission from Labour's roster are the Arabs of Galilee, who account for 60 per cent of Israel's Arab population. Labour also did not accord Arab Christian candidates sufficient prominence on its list, despite the fact that this group makes up 12 per cent of the Israeli Arab population.

In the case of Likud, the picture is reversed. Arab representation within the party's rank and file amounts to only 14,000, with one Druze acting as low-man on the totem pole. His chances of winning a Knesset seat are virtually nil. In the Likud, Russian immigrants have priority over the Arabs.

The picture changes yet again with Meretz. Of the

party's 41,000 members, 6,000 are Arabs and the rest mainly Ashkenazi Jews. Meretz has limited itself to one Arab candidate out of the 14 on its ticket. Originally, the last slot had been reserved for Walid Sadek, the Arab candidate. However, with the odds against him falling, a Knesset seat while locked into the 14th slot, Meretz's leadership moved him to the number nine slot. Even so, there are no guarantees since analysts predict that the party will not win more than seven or eight seats in the election.

When it comes to securing top seats, the Arabs in Labour have a decided advantage over their counterparts in other parties. The reason is mainly because of the high Arab voter turnout in the election of Labour candidates. In some cities, 85 per cent of the Arabs voted for Labour. In some villages, this number rockets to the 100 per cent mark. Overall, the Arab turnout in Labour elections is 67 per cent, affording Arab candidates the chance to slide into four of the party's top ticket slots. Nawaf Massaleha is listed 17, Rafik Al-Haj, 30, Saleh Tarif, 36 and Nadia Al-Helu, 37. As the first Arab woman to ever be a Knesset member, Al-Helu's presence on the Labour ticket poses a serious challenge to Arab parties which do not feature any women on their lists. The Arab courtship with Labour is also shaped by how well the party was, in the past, able to fulfil its electoral promises in parliament.

Though the alliance between Hadash and the National Democratic Assembly is likely to gain a higher percentage of the vote than the two other Arab lists, the split will hamper everyone's chances. But more dangerous than lack of unity is the influence wielded by interest groups and vote swappers who side with the Jewish right-wing and religious parties in order to serve their short-sighted material and personal interests.

## The only possible agenda

'A state for all its citizens,' Azmi Bishara, president of the newly formed National Democratic Assembly, explains his electoral platform

The elections for the 14th Knesset constitute a crossroads for the Arab minority in Israel. They gain significance not only because they coincide with a crucial moment in the peace process but because they are being held at a time when Arabs in Israel appear directionless in front of Zionism. It is this lack of direction, of a compass, that leaves Arabs in Israel prey to a process of Israelisation.

Israelisation involves the marginalisation of Arabs living in Israel. They are offered no option but to inhabit the periphery, as any maintenance of their Palestinian national identity is refused.

From the establishment of the state of Israel, and up to the present day, there has never existed an Israeli nation that encompasses Arabs and Jews. The state of Israel has, throughout its history been *de facto* and *de jure*, exclusively Jewish. In such a context Israelisation can only involve the abandoning of one's identity without it being replaced by another.

It was precisely this worry that informed our attempts to form a national movement with a democratic leadership that might formulate a political agenda for the Arabs of Israel combining civic and national identity related issues within a single framework. Such a movement, it seemed to us, represents the only channel through which to respond to the complex realities experienced by Israel's Arab minority, a minority that until now has lacked a political agenda of its own.

In the 1950s and 60s this Arab minority identified with the Nasserist nationalist project. Those who lent their voices to Zionist parties did so largely out of fear or isolation, though their hearts were always tuned to Cairo. In the 1970s their hearts followed the PLO to Beirut. In Israel the only non-Zionist party was the Communist Party, and it was tuned to Moscow. But following the collapse of the socialist bloc in the late 1980s, the Gulf War of 1990 and the end of the national Palestinian movement, which metamorphosed into an authority with a limited mandate over the West Bank and Gaza, Arabs in Israel were presented with one of two choices. They faced either Israelisation and marginalisation — an option followed by those who joined the Labour party, which washed its hands of Palestinian blood in its historic handshake with Arafat — or else they were bound to formulate a political agenda tuned to the needs of those living in the homeland, not to any foreign capital.

Given this backdrop the only possible agenda is one that raises issues of equality without compromise, one that instigates a political struggle against the Zionist concept of an exclusively Jewish state, reclaiming the concept of democratic citizenship in the face of sectarian and ethnic affiliations.

Such a project requires an historical compromise on the part of Israel, one capable of allowing the state to embrace all its citizens. Normalising the state's relationship with its Arab citizens who, having lost their homeland are now ready to accept equal citizenship, should be an essential prerequisite of the normalisation in relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

The second element in the political agenda of the Arabs of Israel must focus on an emphasis of their national identity as both Arabs and Palestinians. Alongside democracy, citizenship and equality we must struggle for our rights as a national minority with a distinct culture, which requires Israeli recognition of the collective status of Arabs as a national minority rather than a group of religious minorities.

The agenda must also take on board the position of Arabs in Israel vis-à-vis the peace process. While Arabs in Israel wish every success to that process they cannot sit idly by and ignore the inherently flawed nature of a process directed by a status quo that overly favours Israel.

Today many Arabs in Israel feel that the symbolically loaded handshake with Arafat, as well as the continuation of Labour in government simply as a result of inertia in the peace process, are insufficiently substantial foundations on which to build. They wish to see representatives in parliament who will deal critically with the peace process rather than accept it unconditionally.

Our election campaign, then, has necessarily exhibited three dimensions — the political, the civic, and the national. We would hope that the National Democratic Assembly will prove an adequate vehicle for the articulation of the synthesis of these three elements within the Knesset.

## Unnatural allies: the Islamists in Israel

Graham Usher reports from Jerusalem on the strangest of political bed-fellows, while Abdel-Fattah Anwar speaks to Abdel-Malek Dahamsha, the Islamist candidate who heads the United Arab List, about his reasons for standing in the Knesset elections

Whoever is the next Israeli prime minister Israel's 14th Knesset elections will be remembered as a watershed in the political history of Israel's 850,000 Palestinians. On 21 May, Israeli citizen and advisor to Yasser Arafat, Ahmad Tibi, announced that his Arab Party for Change (APC) was withdrawing from the contest so as not to waste "tens of thousands of [Arab] votes".

Tibi was widely seen as the Palestinian authority's surrogate in the elections. "parachuted in" as one Israeli Palestinian put it, to ensure that Arafat's influence was felt inside the green line as well as beyond it. The fact that the APC could not muster the 45,000 votes necessary to win a Knesset seat is doubly significant, says Palestinian director at the Jerusalem based Israeli-Palestinian Centre for Research and Information (IP-CRI), Marwan Darwish.

"It shows that the aura Arafat and the PLO once had among Israel's Palestinians is no more," he says. "But it also shows that the contest for the Arab vote in Israel is now over domestic rather than national issues and between the two main lists."

These are the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash), an Arab-Jewish coalition of groups led by Israel's old Communist Party, and the United Arab List (UAL), supported by the Arab Democratic Party (ADP) and (the majority) stream of Israel's Islamist movement, the latter participating in Knesset elections for the first time. Both lists support the Oslo peace process but the emphasis, especially among the ADP and Islamists, is on improving the lot of Palestinians as citizens of Israel rather than as members of the Palestinian nation.

"Our priorities are the industrialisation of Arab areas inside Israel, land confiscation, civil services and legal equality," says Islamic spokesperson Ibrahim Sarsour. "We have stopped being the representative of the Palestinian nation. We want to be recognised as an integral part of Israeli society."

The dilemma facing Israel's Islamic movement (which, polls show, commands between 25-30 per cent among Palestinians in Israel) is that there is nothing especially Islamist in this vision. Should an Islamist candidate win a seat in the next Knesset, he or she will have to swear allegiance to the Jewish state. "I have no problem with this," says Sarsour, "any more than Jews in the US have a problem with swearing loyalty to the American constitution. Why shouldn't we be cooks in the political kitchen?"

But if Sarsour has no problem, many others do, a fact attested by the schisms the decision to contest the Knesset elections has caused in Islamist ranks inside Israel. Islamist editor of the newspaper *Sawt Al-Haq wal Hurriya*, Hassan Kabib, describes the paradox. "In a parliament with a Jewish majority, we won't be able to raise the slogan 'Islam is the solution' or legislate Islamic laws," he says.

The main advocate of the participationist trend is Abdallah Nimr Darwish, a sheikh from the Arab village of

Umm Al-Fahim in the Galilee, who is recognised as the founder of the Islamic movement in Israel. From the moment the Islamists won seven out of eight Arab municipal elections (largely from the communists) in Israel in 1989, Darwish has argued that the movement should extend its political influence by contesting the Knesset elections. Until recently, it was a message that fell on deaf ears.

In May 1995, the Consultative Council (the Islamist movement's highest political body) decided by a 70 per cent vote not to run a separate list for the next Knesset elections. Then came the Islamist-inspired suicide attacks inside Israel in February and March. As part of the crackdown that followed, Israel closed down Islamic Relief Committees in Umm Al-Fahim and Nazareth for their alleged links to Hamas and arrested Umm Al-Fahim's Islamist deputy mayor, Soliman Agharieh. In response, Darwish lobbied hard to reverse the 1995 decision convening a special Consultative Council on 26 March. By the narrowest of margins (97 for, 94 against), the council voted to contest the Knesset elections, "not as an independent party," says Sarsour, "but as an independent force within a United Arab list."

While Sarsour seized the decision as "a natural development" of the Islamic movement in Israel, others are more sceptical. "The Islamists were scared by Israel's crackdown," says Marwan Darwish. "They also learned from what Arafat did to Hamas after it refused to take part in the PA elections. The Islamists' leadership believe that non-participation means marginalisation, whereas a place in the Knesset gives legitimacy and therefore protection."

In the short term these hunches have been borne out.

In the weeks since the Council vote, Israel has released Agharieh and quietly reopened the committees in Umm Al-Fahim and Nazareth. But for Islamists like Hassan Kabib there are dangers in such realpolitik. The Knesset has always been "a graveyard for Arab parties because they can never realise the demands of their supporters," he says. The implication is that the same fate will now befall the Islamist movement.

These discussions have an effect far beyond the Islamists. On the eve of the Israeli elections, polls showed Peres and Netanyahu at a dead heat. If Peres is to serve a second term as prime minister he is going to require a maximum turnout from Israel's Palestinians, who comprise around 13 per cent of the electorate. Marwan Darwish predicts that, should the Islamists follow the call of their leadership, the Palestinian vote may climb to as high as 80 per cent. Should they listen to the rejectionists and stay at home, the turnout may revert to its norm of 68 per cent. Most Palestinians — Islamists or secular — will vote for Peres. The difference in turnout could be critical. And over the next few days analysts may find that the futures of Peres, Labour and the peace process lie in the hands of the most unnatural of allies — the Islamists of Israel.

Abdel-Malek Dahamsha is candidate number one on the United Arab List (UAL) and representative of the Islamic movement on the UAL. The Weekly asked Dahamsha the reasons behind the change in the Islamic movement's well-known position of boycotting the Knesset. Dahamsha said, "There is not much difference in real terms in our position. We have always advocated participation, though without representatives in parliament. The change now is that we feel the existence of representatives of our movement inside the Israeli parliament will enhance the political struggle of the Arabs of this country in the forthcoming crucial stage."

Asked about divisions inside the Islamic movement due to the decision to participate in the elections of the 14th Knesset, Dahamsha said, "What happened was that some members of the movement insisted on the old position of non-participation for objective and tactical reasons. However, we believe that this non-participationist position, though valid in the past, is wrong now. They believe otherwise, and we hope that they will change their position in the near future."

Asked whether the two leaders of the movement, Sheikh Ra'id Salah and Sheikh Kamal Khatib, who oppose participation in the elections, would abstain from voting for those members of the movement running in the elections, Dahamsha said that neither of the two sheikhs said they would. "This means that all our brothers in the movement will vote for the UAL, whether their trend is represented on that list or not," he added.

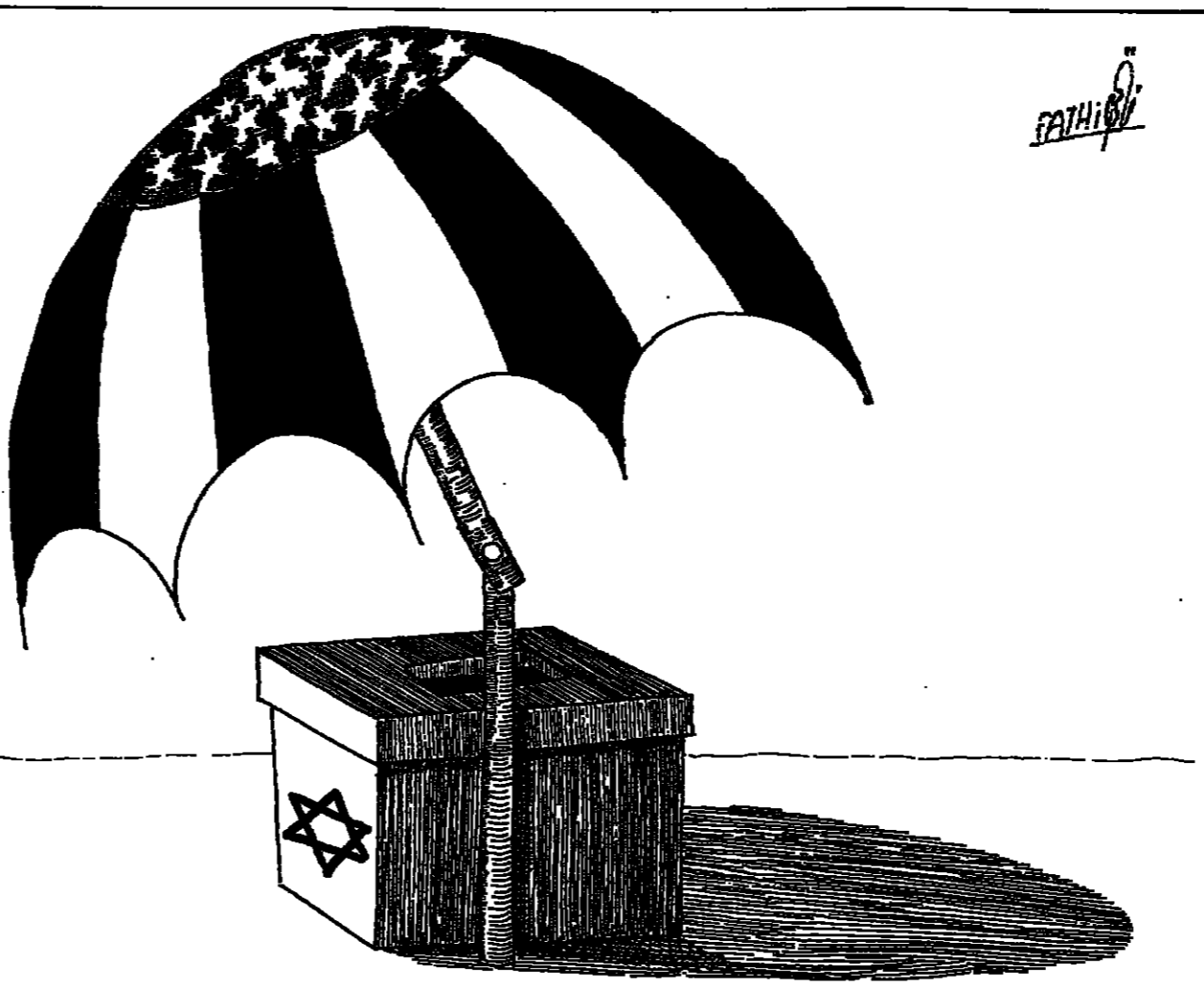
Asked how Islamists running for elections in the Knesset reconcile their Islamic slogans with the declared principles of the Israeli state, based on Jewish religion, he said, "I see no contradiction in Muslims wanting to engage in the political struggle against the oppressive measures and racist policies implemented against our people."

As to the reasons the Islamic movement chose to enter the elections in alliance with the ADP, Dahamsha said, "We did not choose one party in particular. We called upon all Arab parties to form an alliance with us. The ADP was the first to respond, and I am proud to say that the ADP is the only true Arab party in the Israeli political arena. All other parties are either Zionist or semi-Zionist, as is the case with Hadash."

He added that the inability of Arabs to agree on a united list reflected the reality of the Arab situation in Israel. "We did our best to have one Arab list, but it was impossible because it was going to include the communists, or what is called the Front of Peace and Equality. From the very beginning, the Front said that it would have a joint Jewish-Arab list and that it could not accept the Arab nationalist principles we uphold."

Asked whether the alliance between the Islamists and the ADP also implies that the Islamic movement will call upon its supporters to vote for Peres, something which the ADP calls for, Dahamsha responded, "We share the same position as any other member of the UAL. That is, we asked our supporters to elect Peres if he changes his policies towards the Arabs, especially with regard to a comprehensive solution of the Palestinian question. We will not support Peres for his own sake. There is an ongoing political battle and Peres will have to meet our urgent demands in return for our support, otherwise we will be forced not to vote for him."

Asked about which of the two contestants for the premiership he thought would better serve Arab interests, Dahamsha said, "What mainly concerns us is who of the two will better further our aims." He implied that Labour had taken more steps on the road to peace than Likud. However, he believes that the peace process is being threatened at the moment due to the lack of tangible progress towards real peace. Dahamsha concluded by saying, "In all cases, we shall accept whatever government the Israeli people chose and will deal with it in a political manner."



## The logic of dreams

By Mona Anis

The dream of establishing a secular democracy on the historical land of Palestine was an essential component in the formation of the consciousness of those whose political awareness was shaped in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat.

Since then, of course, a great deal of water has passed under a great many bridges. Yet like many Arabs of my generation who empathised with the Palestinian resistance in the seventies that dream from a distant decade has not been abandoned without bitterness.

It was with no small measure of emotion then, and with admittedly mixed feelings, that I received the news that Azmi Bishara, the Beirut University philosophy lecturer and a friend belonging to my generation, was running for a seat in the Knesset. I could feel the lump in my throat as I listened to him talking about what the defeat of the Nasserist project of the 1960s had meant to him, and of how, later, the defeat of the Palestinian national liberation project of the 1970s, with its dream of a secular state, had caused him, like all the Palestinian citizens of Israel, to face fundamental questions about their very existence.

"How is it that the son of a Jew in Brooklyn, who may want to come and live in Israel in 20 years time, has more rights than my son and your sons whose grand-parents and great grand-parents have never left this land," Bishara told a rally of his supporters in Nazareth last week.

He continued: "Our very existence as Arabs is threatened. We are being Israelised. They have succeeded in Israelising the Druze, next will come the bedouins, then the Christians. It is time that we did something to stop this tide. It is time that we struggled for our rights as a national minority and not as religious factions."

Bishara's talk of equal rights for all citizens of Israel and his campaign motto "Israel, a state for all its citizens" may seem miles away from the '70s dream of a secular democratic state. It is, in fact, that is left of that dream.

Nor does it betray the substance of that dream, since at the heart of our vision was a dismantling of Zionism as a racist policy. Within the parameters of possibility Bishara remains true to that earlier vision, seeking to confront the blatant racism of Zionism inside the Knesset.

Yet currently, those who call for the dismantling of Zionism are punishable under Israeli law.

"Zionism exists as a reality in today's Israel," says Bishara. "We acknowledge that. But at the same time we call for a change in that reality in order that we may become truly democratic. Surely the law cannot punish us for wanting Israel to be a true democracy?"

Israel without Zionism may sound a far-fetched dream. But if intellectuals surrender totally to the vulgar considerations of realpolitik what hope remains for a decent future? And what could be more fitting than the fact that it is Azmi Bishara, a professor of philosophy, who is trying to revive the dream many Arabs once shared with peace-loving forces all over the world. To attempt to propagate such a dream inside the Knesset is certainly something that someone like me would have found unthinkable, even in my wildest dreams only few years ago. But dreams have a habit of playing truant. They have a peculiar logic of their own. And the important thing, in the end, is never to stop dreaming.

# Business as usual?

While the majority of senior Arab officials have refrained from issuing eve-of-the-poll statements expressing a preference for either one of the two main contenders in the Israeli elections, apprehension at the prospect of a Likud victory exists in most Arab capitals. Among the most apprehensive are Palestinian officials, Labour's partners in the "Peace of the braves", begun in September 1993.

In an interview in the London-based daily *Al-Hayat*, which appeared on Monday, Yasser Arafat, while refusing to comment on the likely outcome of the elections conceded that a Likud victory could result in a "possible" delay in final status negotiations.

On the same day Abu Mazen, Arafat's number two and the architect of the Oslo Accords, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that while "the [results of the Israeli] elections will affect the overall situation in the Middle East... it is not for us to interfere." He did, however, urge Palestinians inside Israel to vote for the two main Arab lists, while calling upon the head of the third list, Mohamed Zidan, to withdraw from the competition.

If the Palestinians are understandably apprehensive of a Likud victory, whether in the Knesset or the premiership, the Syrians appear less concerned, if for no other reason than that Israel has yet to make any concessions on the Syrian and Lebanese track in line with the spirit and principles of the 1991 Madrid peace conference. Israeli reluctance to abide by a policy of land for peace or to implement UN resolutions demanding withdrawal from Arab land is unlikely, Damascus believes, to alter under a Likud-led government, though some Syrian circles believe it may harden.

Such a belief was reinforced by Sunday's televised debate between Peres and Netanyahu, leading the Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara to comment that Netanyahu's apparent antagonism to any Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights could "destroy all chances for peace in the region".

Despite Al-Shara's statement Syria's official position, as voiced by the *Al-Baath* daily, organ of the ruling Baath party, is that neither Netanyahu nor Peres have shown themselves committed to a just peace, and that, in the absence of a commitment to withdraw from the Golan Heights and from southern Lebanon it makes little difference who wins the elections.

In Cairo this week, Mowfiq Allaf, head of the Syrian delegation to the peace talks told the *Weekly*: "I believe there is an exaggeration in the Arab anxiety over the Israeli elections. The two parties have alternately headed the Israeli government during the peace talks and still there was no real change."

In Beirut, the Lebanese Parliament Speaker, Nabih

*Al-Ahram Weekly* gauges official and opposition reactions to Israel's election race. For different reasons they appear to be in agreement. Plus ça change...

Berri said to the *Weekly* that he did not believe that there was that much difference between Peres and Netanyahu. "In real terms, the difference is not substantive," he said. The secretary-general at the Lebanese Foreign Ministry, Zafir Al-Hassan said there was no doubt that the peace process will continue no matter who wins the elections. "The style and timing, however, may change. But, in the long-run, Israel is committed to the peace process. We negotiate with the Israeli government and not with this person or that party."

Talast Hamed, the Arab League spokesman, echoed Syrian and Lebanese sentiments. Arab concerns, he said, must focus on a just peace and not on this candidate or that. "We do not support one candidate against the other. The election is an internal matter. The League's concern is to achieve just and comprehensive peace and we support those who support peace in the region." Hamed added that it is "the seriousness of Arab endeavours and the extent of inter-Arab coordination and not the Israeli elections that is the issue."

Jordan, bound by international rather than bilateral agreements with Israel, will continue to observe its obligations regardless of a Labour or Likud victory. Musa Braizat, a former member of the Jordanian negotiating team and an official of the Hashemite Royal Court, reiterated in a statement to the *Weekly* the position outlined recently in London by King Hussein: "Jordan's position towards peace in the region is unchanged and will remain so, regardless of who wins the elections."

Braizat dismissed the belief that the majority of Arab states had thrown their weight behind Peres as "simply an assumption", a result of the fact that "both the Palestinians and Jordan began their talks with a Labour government".

While noting that Likud had declared it will respect the Jordanian-Israeli agreement, Braizat conceded that, in the light of Israel's recent offensive against Lebanon and the protracted closures in the West Bank and Gaza, "there is currently what you would call a cold peace between Israel and Jordan. There is general unease about the peace process today both from an Arab and an Israeli standpoint."

Such unease, Braizat believes, is due largely to a cooling on the part of Peres towards implementing clauses of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

"Peres has lost his enthusiasm and dedication, a hallmark of the earlier Labour leadership. It is my perception

that Peres is playing the Jordanians against the Palestinians as a political ploy."

Nor does Braizat believe that Arabs feel as strongly against Likud as has been suggested. Certainly Israeli actions in Lebanon alienated Arab support for the Labour Party. But more important, suggests Braizat, is the fact that Likud has no agenda to change the balance of power in the region.

"Likud has no interest in promoting the evolution of new axes of power and alliances. Likud has a more detached attitude towards the Arab world and is unlikely to attempt to subvert the current axis of power. Likud is only interested in Israeli security," Braizat commented.

The greatest challenge facing Jordan, a country with official relations with Israel, will lie in quelling the unease surrounding efforts to normalise relations with Israel.

A year after the conclusion of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty Jordanians remain divided over the benefits of peace. And while, on an official level, things have progressed — ambassadors have been exchanged, bilateral agreements signed and crossings opened — popular opposition to such moves remains strong.

Many Jordanians of Palestinian origin, forced to leave their homes either in 1948 or 1967, harbour a psychological resistance to Israel. Nearly a third of the Jordanian Parliament opposed the treaty and a great many government officials continue to shun Israeli invitations. Jordan's professional associations, embracing over 80,000 doctors, lawyers, writers, artists and others, remain suspicious of contacts with Israel while Leith Shubailat, head of the 35,000-member Engineer's Union, continues to be detained after publicly attacking King Hussein's policies of normalisation last December.

The Islamists, who hold 17 out of 80 seats in the Jordanian Parliament, have also come under pressure from the Amman government as a result of their opposition to the peace treaty with Israel.

Mohamed Al-Haggag, head of the foreign affairs bureau of the Islamic Labour Front in Jordan, told the *Weekly* that Jordanian Islamists viewed "both Likud and Labour as the representatives of Zionist ambitions."

"The difference between them," he said, "is simply that Likud is more forthright while Labour resorts to deception. The pro-peace process camp supports Peres and Labour under the illusion that the continuation of the

peace process is guaranteed under Labour." As for promises of a Palestinian state these are, suggests Al-Haggag, no more than an electoral ploy on the part of Peres to win Arab votes.

Since the signing of the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty press freedom has also become a victim of tensions between the demands of genuine democracy and the continuing paternalism of the Jordanian monarch. In a speech castigating professional associations for spearheading opposition to normalisation with Israel, King Hussein also called for tightening controls on the media.

In Damascus, the Palestinian opposition groups known as the group of ten, share similar views of Likud and Labour. They all agree that the Israeli parties represent the different sides of the same coin.

The spokesman of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) insisted there was little to differentiate between Likud and Labour. The latter, according to him, merely avoids the strident tones of the former. But the core of the agenda of both parties, he said, is in essence the same — the denial of the rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state, the denial of the right of refugees to return and the dismissal of Arab claims in East Jerusalem. Neither Likud nor Labour is committed to a formula of land for peace, and both refuse to implement UN resolutions demanding withdrawal from occupied territories.

A spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Central Command) insisted that the history of both Labour and Likud gives no reason to suppose that they had different ambitions. Both, he said, were committed to safeguarding the Zionist entity and furthering its expansion by imposing Israeli hegemony, political and economic, over the Arab nation.

The Damascus office of the secretary-general of the Movement of Islamic Jihad in Palestine told the *Weekly* that the Arab world's unprecedented preoccupation with this year's Israeli elections gave it cause for grave concern. All that appears to be left for Arabs to do, said a spokesman, is to repeat the slogan "vote for Peres".

"Yet the only discernible difference between Peres and his main opponent is no more than a matter of emphasis," the spokesman continued. "One insists that the security of Israel in some regions should be a 'Palestinian-Israeli' concern while the other prefers it to be an 'Israeli-Palestinian' concern."

Reported by Tarek Hassan in Gaza, Afef Suleh in Damascus, Zuhair Khodr in Beirut, Samia Mikramah, Shorine Bahaa and Rasha Saad in Cairo

Hadash leader and former Knesset member Hashem Mahamid, and Nadia Al-Helu, certain to be the first Arab woman member of the Knesset, talk to *Al-Ahram Weekly*

## Three into two

Hashem Mahamid, leader of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) told the *Weekly* that though there were three Arab lists contesting Wednesday's Israeli elections, only two lists stood a chance of winning Knesset seats, namely, Hadash and the United Arab List (UAL) supported by the Arab Democratic Party (ADP) and the majority stream of Israel's Islamist movement. Asked whether Arabs could not have agreed on one united list for all, Mahamid said, "In a society based on pluralism, it is very difficult to imagine one Arab list encompassing people with different political and social orientations." He said that his alliance was filing ten candidates, including one Jewish woman and one Arab Christian.

Mahamid, a member of the former Knesset, said that the Front for Peace and Equality has always been known for its struggle against racism and that is the reason why a Jewish candidate, who has worked more for the cause of equality than many Arabs, was included.

Asked about common positions with other Arab lists contesting the elections, Mahamid said that all agreed on withdrawal from the Golan Heights, South Lebanon and Hebron, and on "the establishment of an independent Palestinian state." However, Hadash members categorically oppose the Front's participation in Israeli cabinets because of Israel's oppressive policies in the Occupied Territories and its racial discrimination against Arab Palestinians inside Israel. "Other Arab parties, such as Darawsha's ADP, accept such participation. We have always held a different position on that issue. We do not accept to be partners with the Labour Party or any other Zionist party." Mahamid said that Hadash's performance in the Knesset is distinct from any other Arab performance inside the Knesset. "Only recently, and following the suicide bombings of last February and March, we refused to vote in the Knesset for a resolution that included in its second article a call upon the government to clamp down with an iron fist on elements of Hamas and Jihad, wherever they are. Other Arab Knesset members voted for that resolution."

Asked about why he turned down an offer by the Islamic movement and the ADP to run on a united platform, Mahamid said that the Islamic movement labels Hadash non-Islamic and that he got the offer from Darawsha only, the head of an Arab party that is willing to participate in government coalitions. "It is a legitimate right for Arabs to aspire to be cabinet members, but I refuse to be a member of a cabinet whose policies I oppose," he stated.

Mahamid said that it was the historically broad and non-sectarian vision of his group's members that prevented the fragmentation of the Arabs of Israel into sectarian groups (Druze, Bedouin, Muslim, etc.). Asked about the prospects of the appointment of an Arab minister if Labour wins the elections, Mahamid said that he did not think Peres would take such a step. "This is all election propaganda," he said. Asked if Hadash will ask its supporters to vote for Peres and Labour, he responded, "There is no official position calling for the election of Peres." However, "national responsibility dictates that we try and prevent Netanyahu from coming to power," he added.

Mahamid told the *Weekly* that when he met with Peres recently, Peres began with a threat. "He said that Sharon or Netanyahu are the alternatives if we do not vote for him." Still, Mahamid presented Peres with Hadash demands, namely, withdrawal from the Golan Heights and South Lebanon, the dismantlement of settlements, the release of Palestinian political detainees, complete sovereignty of Arabs over Islamic Waqfs, and equality for the Arabs with Jews in budget allocations.

Mahamid told the *Weekly* that Peres said he will consider some of these demands, pointing out at the same time that the question of withdrawal from the Golan Heights is subject to President Assad's willingness to meet with him and the dismantling of Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Asked about the number of seats he expected Hadash to win in Wednesday's elections, Mahamid said that he expected five Hadash candidates to make it to the Knesset.

## A foot in the door

Nadia Al-Helu was given a position high up on the Labour Party's electoral list and is guaranteed a seat in the Knesset. She is an Arab Christian from Jaffa, married with four daughters.

Asked by *Al-Ahram Weekly* why she chose to run on the Labour Party ticket and not on that of any Arab parties, she said: "No Arab party invited me to join their ranks. Besides, only the Labour Party would guarantee me a seat in the Knesset." She said that the Labour Party's position vis-à-vis the peace process was an important factor in her decision to join the party. "Though there are still many gaps to bridge, the Labour Party has indicated that it will work towards achieving equality between Arabs and Jews," she said.

In response to a question about what she planned to work for inside the Labour Party, she said, "One can influence the party from within to achieve more rights for the Arab community inside Israel. Also, one can endeavour to advance the peace process and push it forward towards the realisation of comprehensive peace."

Helu, who is known for her primarily social and educational public work and who is presently the chairwoman of an early childhood centre, said that her main electoral base consists of Arab votes and that her election campaign is also targeting the Jewish people as an Arab woman who belongs to the people of Israel. In the Knesset, she will concentrate on "social and educational issues" of concern to Arabs of Israel in their everyday life.

Other important goals for Nadia Al-Helu are those relating to women's issues. "I will call for greater job opportunities for women and will work towards raising women's consciousness while at the same time preserving Arab traditions and religious values. This will require legislation that takes into consideration the special position of Arab women in Israeli society," she said.

Nadia Al-Helu said that though she was offered no promises regarding any cabinet position, many Arabs still wish to see her in the new cabinet. "The Arabs of Israel can play a greater political role, especially with regard to the peace process. This is what I want to focus on most," she said.

Asked about grey areas of contention between the majority of Arabs and the declared policies of the Labour Party, such as the issue of Jerusalem, Helu responded, "The new programme of the Labour Party recognises the establishment of a Palestinian state. As for Jerusalem, it has a special status, and maybe the solution to that problem is finding an international formula." Asked to further elaborate, Helu implied that she does not favour a solution that would make Jerusalem the capital of the Palestinians, preferring a solution satisfactory to all parties concerned that would not put the peace process in jeopardy.

Interviews by Abdel-Fattah Anwar in Jerusalem

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# Major's war cry

Will Britain's mad cow disease butcher the hope of European unity?  
Tudor Lomas searches for answers in London, Brussels and Strasbourg

Since the first days of spring, back in March, senior members of the British parliament have been exhibiting symptoms of mad politicians disease. Rather like mad cow disease, to which it is, of course, closely linked, the political version causes its victims to make a lot of noise, roll their eyes and lose touch with reality. But unlike the bovine form it is accompanied by bouts of righteous indignation, a hot-house atmosphere of hysteria and a frantic search for scapegoats in Brussels.

The condition reached a critical stage a few days ago when British Prime Minister John Major told the House of Commons: "We cannot continue business as usual within Europe, when we are faced with a clear disregard by some of our partners of reason, common sense and Britain's national interests." This fever pitch was reached by the refusal of Europe's veterinary experts even to begin to ease the ban on the export from Britain of beef products like gelatine and tallow.

"Major goes to war at last," declared the right-wing tabloid *Daily Mail* with satisfaction. "Europe faces chaos as Britain gets tough after two months of dither over beef ban... triggering the greatest crisis in Britain's 23-year European membership."

There are many serious and tragic aspects to the whole mad cow affair, but it still seems ridiculous that the political development of the European Union should be halted and its everyday workings disrupted over British beef products. Understanding how this came about provides some useful insights into the realities of politics in both Westminster and Brussels.

The proper name for mad cow disease is Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and perhaps the outbreak that has been spreading rapidly in Westminster might correctly be called PSE — Politicians Sensing Electoral-defeat. That seems a

more relevant explanation of all the recent bizarre behaviour than anything coming out of Brussels and Strasbourg, or even than a possible surfeit of infected beef in the House of Commons restaurants.

Electoral arithmetic, not medical science, explains what is going on. Three simple facts provide a surer route to understanding than volumes of research into the pathology and epidemiology of all the spongiform encephalopathies yet discovered.

John Major and his Conservatives have a majority of one in the House of Commons. The next general election in Britain must be held less than a year from now. And the Conservatives are at least 20 per cent behind the opposition Labour Party in the opinion polls.

His tiny Commons majority makes John Major a prisoner of any small group within his own party that is single-minded and determined enough to pursue its own aims even by making deals with the opposition and risking bringing down its own government. Such a group exists. The so-called Eurosceptics: Conservatives for whom the notion of Britain having closer ties with Europe has already gone too far.

For them, any thought of a common European foreign or defence policy is virtually incomprehensible; a European currency is unwanted and unwelcome; much of what the European Union is doing at the moment is an unwarranted interference in the affairs of national governments; and the bureaucrats in Brussels harmonising economic conditions across the single European market are an easy target for jokes and derision.

The European Union's worldwide ban on British beef exports has been a gift for these irreconcilables. And the support of the raucous, right-wing press has aided them in oversimplifying it as yet another anti-British Euro-maneuvre, conveniently avoiding how much worse the plight

would have been without support from Brussels.

As the leader of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, British MEP Pauline Green, told me, surveying the antics of these Euro-sceptics in parliament and the press, "The way they're behaving, anyone would think Mad Cow Disease had been invented in a test tube in Brussels."

It is an impression that assists a beleaguered British prime minister, particularly when his government has handled the BSE business so ineptly from the beginning. If you can blame Brussels perhaps the public will forget it was Conservative governments that failed to stop BSE from sweeping through British herds, or that it was John Major's government that announced two months ago that there might be a link between BSE and a human brain disease, or that it was his government that had no measures in place to cope with the panic that inevitably followed.

By converting BSE from an issue of health and competence into one of flag-waving and Brussels-bashing, John Major is not just trying to limit the existing damage. He is also thinking of the looming general election.

The right-wing press, so scornful of his performance and persona to date, are on his side against the Eurocrats. They make it all so simple. With echoes of the Falklands and metaphors of war, they have John Major "standing up for Britain" and rallying cries to boycott German products — because the Germans voted against lifting the ban on British beef. There is even talk of an early "beef election", with images of valiant John riding back to victory on a side of jingoism, nostalgia and short-sightedness.

Such sentiments, in the words of *The Economist* magazine, "are merely risible" as a way to sell

newspapers but are much more serious as a way to run a country, because "other countries will take them seriously". And that, of course, means they will take Britain less seriously.

In Strasbourg last week, where the European Parliament was meeting, there were two kinds of reaction. Among many there was a weary exasperation tinged with understanding of British domestic political realities; in effect, a refusal to take the posturing too seriously, but a realisation that it would cause some problems. The reaction of a thoughtful parent to a difficult teenager, typified by the assurances of the parliament's president, Klaus Hensch: "We survived the empty chair policy of France in the time of General de Gaulle. Britain's 'blocked chair' will be less disruptive."

Some important Europeans though, when prodded, were less accommodating. Having studied the words and actions of Major, former European Commissioner Willy de Clercq accused him of "an unbelievable historical blunder". De Clercq, now a member of the European Parliament for the Belgian Liberals, said it was incredible that Britain should threaten to disrupt negotiations on the future of Europe over the beef crisis: "You can't attack the whole of Europe over this issue."

The president of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, the nearest figure the union has to a prime minister, tried to carve out a middle way, criticising Britain's handling of the crisis and lack of consultation with its partners, but appearing to promise an early lifting of the export ban on the token beef products that have become the symbol of European good faith for Britain — tallow, gelatine and bull's semen.

Such even-handedness merely inflamed matters in Britain, where it was seen as too little, too late. Santer was dismissed as "obstructive" by the chair-

man of the House of Commons Agriculture Committee for not providing a detailed timetable for the return of all British beef to export markets. And Europe, not Major's government, was blamed for the panic among the world's beef-eaters, because Brussels had not "applied scientific principles" to the export ban.

The worry now is that the calm application of scientific or any other principles by the European Union may not be enough to diffuse the crisis in relations with Britain, for some time. Brussels may seek earnestly to help, it may pay hundreds of millions of Ecu in compensation, it may stop all its other business to concentrate on British beef, but that will not be enough.

John Major, to appease his right wing and fashion a populist, if incredible, electioneering strategy, has indicated he intends to continue to demand more from his European partners than they can possibly give; after all, they have their own farmers, beef-eaters and voters to consider. And he then has to win or stand firm — he has left himself with no alternative, unless he is also prepared to surrender the scant authority he retains back home as prime minister.

Such a strategy may make some sense in the overheated atmosphere of Westminster where mad cow disease continues to mutate into mad politicians disease. But viewed from Brussels and Strasbourg it seems as unacceptable as the practice of feeding ground-up remnants of diseased dead sheep in the form of protein supplements to herbivores like cows. It was, after all, that sort of short-sighted behaviour that caused the whole problem in the first place.

The writer is the director of the MedMedia-Jemstone Project of the European Commission.

## Burying the UN?

Reacting to the financial strangulation of the United Nations by the US and other great powers, Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, last week, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* he was not ready to act as the international organisation's "undertaker". Rasha Saad reviews the UN's desperate attempts at survival

Earlier this month, the United Nations undersecretary-general for administration and management, Joseph Connor, revealed how bad the UN's financial situation was. Unpaid contributions owed by member states totalled \$2.8 billion. Of that amount, \$1.5 billion were owed by the United States, \$400 million by the Russian Federation and \$250 million by Ukraine.

The UN is now attempting to reduce its expenditure and is proposing that 1,000 jobs be cut from its bureaucracy over two years. The reductions would be made mainly at the New York headquarters, although the organisation's five other offices around the world would also be affected. A source at a UN information centre who asked to remain anonymous said that the financial problem was so critical that it was difficult to convey requests between the heads of the different branches of the world organisation. "We are not even allowed to send the headquarters a fax message unless it is very urgent," the source said.

However, the US Congress, which is responsible for holding up the payment of America's contributions, did not seem satisfied with the suggested redundancies. Jesse Helms, arch-conservative chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has asked for a 50 per cent cut in the UN bureaucracy.

Observers believe that the US intends, through financial pressures, to cripple the UN so as to guarantee its hegemony in the new world order. Mohamed El-Sayed Said, deputy director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, said the US was "seeking to enjoy the privileges of leadership without its responsibilities".

Speaking of the amount the US would pay the UN in 1996, Connor explained that of the \$304 million approved by Congress for regular budget payments, \$139 million had already been paid and of the \$359 million approved for the peacekeeping budget, \$174 million has already been paid.

Focusing on the financial contributions of the UN member states, Said criticised the UN's large dependence on its members. He believes that the UN should have resorted to other resources to guarantee its financial independence. "The UN could have imposed fees on transaction activities. For instance, it could have issued an international stamp, or even a \$1 fee on air tickets could have ensured its independence and helped in developing its activities," he said.

This year the UN will have to borrow, once more, from peacekeeping funds to meet regular budget obligations. Starting from mid-August, it will have to borrow around \$50 million. By the end of 1996, about \$200 million will have been borrowed from the peacekeeping budget.

The importance of the UN peacekeeping forces has greatly increased amidst the spread of separatist movements and civil war in the world. To its first four decades, the UN launched 13 peacekeeping operations. Since 1988, it has undertaken 25. The surge has pushed blue helmet troop strength to a current level of 62,500 and the number of civilian peacekeeping staff to 7,300. Annual outlays now stand at \$3.1 billion — more than twice the budget for the UN's other main activities combined.

Said believes, however, that the role of the peacekeeping forces has not proved to be very effective. "These forces have not succeeded in averting the destruction of war or even putting a solution to a dispute except in a very few cases," he said. Said's suggestion is that an international army should exist whose role goes beyond peacekeeping and includes deterring any violations.



Last Monday, Sarajevans queued up with roses in front of the spot where a Serbian shell slammed into a line of people queuing for bread (photo:AFP)

## The yawn factor

American voters are confused, but, writes Tarek El-Tablawy, not as confused as the candidates from whom they have to choose

It's no easy feat to bring a grizzled reporter to the verge of hysterical tears. However, on board Bob Dole's campaign plane, the *Leader's Ship*, tears flow as freely as rhetoric. "Oh, God, this is the worst yet," moaned one reporter recently, referring to the less-than-stellar landing executed by the blundering pilot flying the shaky campaign shuttle.

But while the landing and the pilot have been the butt of jokes among those members of the press tagging along with Dole on his campaign, so too have the campaign and Dole himself.

To the dismay of his aides, the same comment which spilled forth from the terrified reporter's lips about the landing is all too applicable to Dole's campaign strategy. That is, if there is a strategy at all. The 72-year-old presidential candidate has been blasted in the media as much as he has been touted — and has earned the dubious distinction of being the only presidential candidate in US history who would have been better off not campaigning at all.

In an effort to close Clinton's nearly 20-point lead in the polls, Dole has resigned his Senate seat. Should he lose the race to the White House, he will have effectively brought to an end an illustrious 36-year-long career on Capitol Hill. Democrats dubbed his decision "an act of desperation". But Dole supporters assert he is rolling up his shirt sleeves in preparation for a bare-knuckles brawl, the winner of which will sit in the Oval Office.

It will take Dole, however, much more than pounding the pavements to win over voters, swing or aligned. His distaste for public appearances is of legendary proportions and a bounty has been put on the head of anyone who ever witnesses him kissing a baby in a parade. Even in moments of victory, such as his denunciation of Pat Buchanan and Steve Forbes in a string of primaries beginning with South Dakota and ending with Super Tuesday, his speeches were, well, unmemorable.

At the black-tie dinner celebrating his victory, Dole reached Shakespearean oratorical heights with his closing words. "God bless America. Goodnight. And see you soon," he muttered. Not exactly the kind of fire-and-brimstone soliloquies that Buchanan can rattle off at the drop of a hat, inciting a crowd of Christian Coalition converts to near mob-level excitement.

Then again, Dole has built his image and career on decades of shrewd negotiating over ticklish legislation, massaging away the worries of the opposition. Pulpit-pounding has been left to the Buchanans and Gingrichs.

The political geyser of ideological discrepancy and frivolity that is the current Republican Party is where Dole's problems stem from. The fractious nature of the party has hurt Dole. So much so, in fact, that Senator Alfonse D'Amato, co-chairman of Dole's national campaign steering committee, tongue-lashed Republican House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich and his entourage for perpetuating the image that "the Republican Party is... exclusionary".

Resigning from the Senate instead of temporarily relinquishing his authority is Dole's strategy to unite and conquer, and rid the Grand Old Party (GOP) of its elitist, country-club image among the voters. More campaigning time means more votes, say his aides. Unfortunately, what Dole has amassed in experience, he lacks in charisma. During a rally in Florida, he prefaced his stump speech by reportedly saying, "I'll only be a few minutes, because I know you probably have something better to do."

Even his war record has become a mixed blessing and a source of frustration. At campaign dinners, Dole has suffered through waiters cutting his steak for him, assuming that he cannot use his arm at all. The same can be said about his childhood in Kansas. His unwillingness to talk about "the lean years" is matched only by Clinton's eagerness to reminisce about his — a childhood likened to a heart-wrenching Oprah Winfrey saga on redneck child psychology and development.

If it appears that Dole is a little uncomfortable with the press, then it is probably because he is. Media hounds are always on hand to immortalise such moments as when he is mistakenly introduced at an event as "Dob Dole" or "Bob Bush". But a more likely source of irritation for his campaign staff and for him are questions such as "Where are the people?" that are hurled by the press at rallies.

On the issues, Dole and Clinton are like Tweedledee and Tweedledum, noted one White House correspondent. In the realm of foreign policy, both Clinton and Dole try to come across as the hard internationalists. They both agonised over the Bosnia crisis and were reluctant to take decisive action. When it comes to the Middle

East, they are both equally in the American-Israeli Political Action Committee's pockets. On economic matters, domestic and international, they are two peas in a pod. Dole is a stark supporter of Federal Reserve head Alan Greenspan. Clinton reappointed him. They walked hand-in-hand on the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the Mexican bail-out. Abortion, an issue sure to rouse the rage of the Christian Coalition, is a moot point for at least another generation, thanks to a liberal Supreme Court majority. And should the issue even come to a head, Dole is more likely than not to sell out the interests of the far right to secure the votes of the moderates and the swing voters — two groups already in Clinton's cross-hairs. In fact, the only noticeable distinction between the two men's policies is on the issue of school uniforms, which the incumbent president favours.

Clinton has jumped on the moral bandwagon, chest-pounded and fumed about the dangers of violence on television, hyped up the violence chip for TV and taken a heavy swing at tobacco manufacturers. This may, however, be a dangerous gambit. Clinton has already, and will again, come under fire for a variety of charges ranging from allegedly dropping his pants before a young woman while serving as governor of Arkansas to the Whitewater scandal, which led to his wife testifying before a Senate fact-finding committee.

So where does it go from here? With the Republicans firmly entrenched in Congress, Clinton has lost his legislative arm. Before Dole left the Senate, he was embroiled in a bitter struggle with Clinton over rolling back the 4.3 per cent gasoline tax as a counter-measure to skyrocketing prices. Clinton, despite the popularity of the move, is likely to veto the measure if the Republicans attempt to offset the revenue loss by slashing education spending — a GOP hobby. The issue is particularly sensitive for Clinton since it was education that allowed him to sleep through Vietnam in an Oxford University classroom.

Because of battles such as this, the race has so far been one for the insiders. The tides are changing, as tides are apt to do, and, say analysts, it is going to be a run-off so ugly and snide that it will leave voters wishing for the high-brow banner characterising the Bush-

Dukakis campaign in 1988.

"Image, and campaign advisors, are likely to be among the deciding factors in the campaign," said John Doughty, a political analyst in a major New York consulting firm. Unfortunately, both Dole and Clinton change advisors more often than mothers replace their babies' diapers.

Dole must focus on stealing away from Clinton key states like Florida, which Clinton nearly carried during the last election without even trying. Dole's campaign heads are also targeting Ohio, Illinois, New Jersey, Michigan and Wisconsin, five states with Republican governors. "Should he carry any three of these, it will put him well in the running, even if he loses California to Clinton," noted Doughty.

The race won't be easy for Clinton, either. His advisors are pushing what they call the MMEP (Medicare, Medicaid, education and environment) platform. And this is sure to earn him support in Florida where senior citizens and members of the American Association of Retired Persons settle down for some time in the sun.

A platform such as this one, says Harold Barger, a professor of political science at Trinity University in Texas, "is unlikely to garner much in the way of support from the swing voters and those in Republican-held states." It is, however, all that Clinton has to work with unless he can capitalise more on his foreign policy successes. "He will also find it hard to play down his record as governor of Arkansas," said Barger. When Clinton was first elected in the late 1970s, the state ranked 49th in median income. Now it ranks 48th. In terms of education, in 1978 Arkansas ranked 44th in per-pupil school spending. Now it ranks 46th. An unimpressive conclusion to a less-than-illustrious gubernatorial career.

Unfortunately, these issues may end up not carrying much weight with the voters. Some pollsters seem to be preoccupied with more cosmetic issues. Two women at a Florida rally for Dole were overheard having a heated debate about his hair. "I think it must be dyed," said the first. "But you know," said her friend, "we want him to dye his hair. This is America. We want a young leader." So much for the respect that comes with experience and age.

Edited by Gamal Nikumrah

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## Albania election

ALBANIA was hit with the most serious threat to its young democracy this week after general elections were denounced as illegal by nearly all the opposition. President Sali Berisha and his ruling Democratic Party celebrated after the poll, telling supporters they predicted a bigger landslide victory than the 62 per cent in the last nationwide ballot in 1992.

Five opposition parties, led by the former communist Socialist Party, had withdrawn from the elections three hours before polling closed and accused the ruling conservatives of fraud and intimidation against their candidates. In a statement, the opposition accused Berisha's government of creating "a climate of terror, psychological pressure and physical violence" before and on election day.

Some of the 400 international observers also expressed reservations about how the election was conducted. European Parliament member Jean-François Vallin said he and 12 other foreign observers had witnessed several irregularities in the northern district of Vlores.

After polls closed, the electoral commission put turnout at 80 per cent. Albania's electorate of 2.2 million was voting in its third elections since the collapse in 1990 of Europe's last Stalinist regime.

The elections were for 140 parliamentary seats, 25 of which are allocated on a proportional basis. President Berisha, who was elected by parliament in 1992, has one more year to serve. He has promised continued rapid growth in the economy of destitute Albania, Europe's poorest nation.

## Suu Kyi's challenge

PRO-DEMOCRACY leader Aung San Suu Kyi this week closed a dramatic Burmese opposition congress with an appeal for the military regime to free 262 delegates it had arrested to prevent the meeting taking place.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) demanded that the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council call into session the parliament elected in 1990. The parliament was never allowed to convene after the pro-democracy movement won 392 of the 485 contested seats.

Later, up to 10,000 people gathered at the gates of Suu Kyi's lakeside home in the capital Rangoon — four times the usual number that appear on weekends to hear her speak. The speech marked her biggest challenge to the ruling junta since her release last July from six years of house arrest.

The three-day congress marked the sixth anniversary of the annulled 1990 elections and was intended to bring together Burmese opposition figures. Many have been killed, jailed or driven into exile.

Amnesty International, the London-based human rights group, reported last year that at least 800 political prisoners were being held in Burma's Insein Prison. Interrogators reportedly beat prisoners unconscious, make them crawl over sharp stones and keep them for hours in the blazing sun.

Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for her non-violent promotion of democracy, staged a political protest by going ahead with the congress and announcing that several members would be held. Daughter of Burma's independence hero, Aung San, she emerged as opposition leader during street protests in 1988 that were crushed when troops killed hundreds of people.

Compiled by Heba Samir

# Swan song in Bamut

Yeltsin finally visited war-torn Chechnya as part of his presidential election campaign. As a peacemaker the Russian president stands a better chance of winning the forthcoming elections, writes Abdel-Malek Khalil from Moscow

Why have the Chechen resistance forces now decided to negotiate with Russian President Boris Yeltsin? The Russians claimed final victory over Chechen separatist forces when they captured the Chechen resistance stronghold of Bamut last Friday. The tiny town of Bamut withstood determined Russian offensives throughout the war and its fall was a terrible psychological blow to the Chechen fighters.

On Monday Yeltsin and Chechen separatists signed an accord in Moscow on a ceasefire and exchange of all prisoners. It is generally accepted that the agreement had more to do with the approaching Russian presidential elections than with a genuine change of heart on either side of the conflict. But ending the Chechen war is high on Yeltsin's political agenda.

The 17-month war is very unpopular in Russia and with three weeks to go before the Russian presidential elections, Yeltsin wants to be seen as doing his utmost to end it.

The Chechen war has left 40,000 dead. The Russians claim that they have lost 2,805 men, in addition to 10,319 injured, 393 missing or unaccounted for and 133 taken hostage. Yeltsin's position is particularly sensitive because he took the decision to invade Chechnya in December 1994. Also, in his capacity as the supreme commander of the Russian armed forces, it is his responsibility to provide security for the thousands of Russian soldiers who are still fighting on sev-

eral fronts in Chechnya.

For his meeting this week with Chechen rebels in the Kremlin, Yeltsin gathered around him his army chief of staff, regional ministers and the ministers of the interior and security, along with many advisors. Conspicuously absent from the negotiations was General Pavel Grachev, long considered a hawk who has tarnished Yeltsin's political image. Grachev's exclusion may have been motivated by the widely held belief that Yeltsin must soften his image in order to win more votes. Grachev's exaggerated accounts of Russia's military potential were instrumental in pushing Yeltsin and his top brass into the disastrous Chechen adventure.

The Chechen delegation was headed by rebel leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, who was also a prominent figure in last year's talks between the Russians and the Chechens. The meeting between Yeltsin and the Chechen separatists was also attended by the Russian-backed puppet Chechen government. Yandarbiyev, like his predecessor Dzhokhar Dudayev who was killed in a Russian air strike, had refused to talk to the Moscow-backed government in the Chechen capital Grozny.

It is noteworthy that the Chechen fighters presently negotiating with Moscow have affirmed their separatist stand. They continue to demand independence and self-determination for the province, claiming that they will not be swayed from their position — re-

gardless of the time and costs involved. Yeltsin and his crew received the Chechen delegation amid exceptionally tight security provisions in Moscow. The Chechen resistance responded in kind, promising to provide Yeltsin with a safe environment should he decide to visit Chechnya.

As it turned out Yeltsin had already decided to go. After signing the agreement with the Chechen leaders on 27 May, he left his negotiating team to deal with its finer details and headed towards Grozny. There he proclaimed an imminent peace and announced that certain Russian military units would be withdrawn by 1 September.

So far, the Yeltsin camp has not publicly questioned the Chechen resistance's sincerity. Yeltsin appears to have trusted implicitly the Chechens' assurances. It is evident that Yeltsin wants to

make a point of proving his sincerity to his voters by making good on his campaign pledges. He also ordered Yandarbiyev to impose a ceasefire for a period of 72 hours — a period deemed sufficient to boast that he took steps to end the hostilities in Chechnya.

A period of three days also gives the president a reprieve before he has to face the other contenders for the presidency, the most important of whom is Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Russian Communist Party — who as it happens dismissed the lat-

est ceasefire as a ploy by the Chechens to regroup. Whatever their political orientation, all Russians are agreed that Yandarbiyev's decision to kick out the local Communist Party boss in Grozny in 1991 has had a grave impact on Russia.

## Yeltsin's campaign blues

In the run-up to the Russian presidential elections in June, Yeltsin has been trying every trick in the book to boost his opinion poll ratings, writes Faiza Rady

Considering Boris Yeltsin's December approval ratings of five per cent, the current 25 per cent support for the Russian president in opinion polls testifies to his dramatic political facelift while on the campaign trail. Evidence of Yeltsin's hard and swift public relations manoeuvring appears in popular discourse. While the Russians in January most often described him as "drunk", "unhealthy", "can't be trusted" and "not smart", today people merely categorise him as "not smart".

Yeltsin's deletion of the other adjectives qualifying him has cost him a lot in hard cash — mainly provided by a recent \$10 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund. "In just the past several weeks he has signed a decree giving a \$5 billion subsidy to farmers and has said commercial electricity rates will be cut in half," wrote *Time* magazine.

In Yaroslavl, an industrial town 260km northeast of Moscow where he was vociferously heckled throughout his campaign speech, Yeltsin tried to assuage his audience with fast pay-outs. During the few hours he spent in Yaroslavl, he pledged \$700,000 to build housing for veterans of the Afghan war, \$10,000 for the Russian Orthodox Church, \$20,000 towards the construction of a Muslim cultural centre and \$2 million for a military school. Despite Yeltsin's sudden largesse, most people remained hostile, reported *Time*. "Yes, there's food in the stores, but who can afford it?" blasted a young factory worker, presumably one among the estimated one-third to one-half of the workforce unable to purchase the vital minimum on their \$33 monthly take-home pay. Derisive about their hardship, other workers quoted the popular, but by now worn-out one-liner, "Since Yeltsin hit us with his economic reform package, we have taken to visiting stores like we visit museums."

"Our savings have become worthless," fumed a middle-aged electrician, referring to last year's 200 per cent annual inflation rate. "All we ever get from you are promises," was the common refrain directed at Yeltsin.

When workers in Yaroslavl booed him for withholding their salaries for months on end, Yeltsin con-

veniently scapegoated local administrators and begged trade unionists to assist him by "keeping an eye" on regional officials who were presumably embezzling funds which, he claimed, had already been disbursed.

No payment of workers' wages has become a permanent feature of Yeltsin's ill-fated administration. Such conditions are symptomatic of Russia's reformed economy which "has been mired in a web of unpaid debts paralysing the state and much of its moribund industrial base," commented the *International Herald Tribune*. Last February's nationwide strike by an estimated 450,000 coal-mine workers protesting a three-month wage delay, as well as a work stoppage involving more than 250,000 unpaid teachers, illustrated the dimension of the crisis.

Comparing the present situation with earlier strikes in the Soviet Union, Aman Tuleev, the former co-miners' union leader, said, "In '89 we struck for two months, but the state paid our salaries and premiums. Today wages are delayed, equipment neglected and there are 15 work-related deaths for every extracted ton of coal." As a result of untenable working conditions and endemic wage delays, the miners' vote — which had helped Yeltsin win the 1991 presidential elections — went to Gennady Zyuganov's Communist Party in last December's legislative elections. Political analysts predict that the miners' discontent runs too deep to be swayed by Yeltsin's self-serving campaign handouts and that they will vote Communist come 16 June.

Threatened by the Communists' gain of one-third of parliament seats in the legislative elections and Gennady Zyuganov's high opinion poll ratings, Yeltsin sought to mobilise regional political support. As a result, the leaders of 11 former Soviet republics urged their constituencies to support Yeltsin's reelection bid. Fearing to lose their newly gained independence to the Communists' central planning strategy, some leaders played Yeltsin's game and strongly denounced the Communist Party. "We are horrified to think that the Russian people may be carried away by nostalgia for the past," said Nursultan

Nazarbayev, president of Kazakhstan. "A victory for the Communists would lead to the disintegration of the Commonwealth."

In a last-ditch effort to woo prospective voters, Yeltsin has resorted to demonising his opponents by playing on people's deep-seated fears. Forecasting immediate upheaval should the Communists come to power, Yeltsin's economic adviser, Alexander Livshits, told the Interfax news agency that people would be safe, at least on a short-term basis. "We have large reserves of grain, meat, sugar and butter," he proclaimed. "The Russian economy will survive a [Communist] victory for several months."

In addition to disseminating the "big red scare", Yeltsin proceeded to orchestrate a disinformation campaign with the compliance of the anti-Communist mainstream media. A case in point: on 15 May, the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* wrote that the Communists only fake moderation and reform for campaigning purposes, while they secretly plan to restore a hard-line socialist economy. The paper published what it said was an economic blueprint which called for the necessity to introduce major centralisation of mobilisation and division of resources, a rapid reinforcement of state control over the economy, over production control and use. Despite their public posture, the Communists would forgo the market economy, nationalise key industries and revert to the centralised planned economy, concluded the paper. In response to these allegations, the Communist Party issued an immediate denial and accused the pro-Yeltsin press of attempting to blacken its image ahead of the election.

In addition to directing disinformation campaigns in the media and attempting to buy off unpaid and angry workers, the Russian president has worked hard to soften his warmonger image. Russia's ill-fated and unprovoked bloody invasion of Chechnya

ince its infrastructure and cost Yeltsin the liberal vote. Recently, the Vienna-based Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe issued a report condemning the Russian army for using excessive force against civilians and engaging in robbery, looting and arson. The army's continued attacks against villages with a strong rebel presence "have to be qualified as warfare against the civilian population", the report said.

In an effort to come out of Chechnya with a trophy, Yeltsin told the Russian National Security Council in a closed session that "a rapid and decisive victory was necessary, regardless of the costs". So the military went on a renewed rampage, eventually killing the charismatic leader of the Chechen resistance, Dzhokhar Dudayev, on 21 April. "A feat that was accomplished... when Russian electronic warfare experts reportedly zeroed in on Dudayev's satellite phone and called in air strikes," reported *Time*.

With Chechen resistance forces in disarray and Dudayev out of the picture, Yeltsin proposed bilateral peace talks, but only with the aim of capitalising on potential liberal vote returns. "We'll settle for appearing serious about reaching an accommodation," explained an aide. "It is all part of the larger theme Yeltsin is trying."

Yet given Yeltsin's dismal political record, his "larger theme" may very well go down the drain. Although Yeltsin has managed over the past few months to somewhat improve his public image, it seems unlikely that the majority of Russian workers will be duped by pre-election pay-outs, political slander campaigns, media propaganda or the semblance of peace in Chechnya.



## Pragmatism rules BJP out

The Indian parliament's vote of no confidence on Tuesday sealed the fate of the short-lived BJP government. Was it a question of redefining or reaffirming Indian democracy, asks Gamal Nkrumah

"The present unrest in India ... is to me one of the most hopeful signs of the times." Thus wrote the Third World's first Nobel literature laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, in 1909 from his sanctuary, Shantiniketan, deep in the rural hinterland of the Bengali metropolis, Calcutta. Tagore's words were addressed to American correspondent and New York lawyer, Myron Phelps.

Tagore rarely fell victim to the ideological currents of his lifetime. He was often maligned for his political aloofness. But Tagore did flirt with Bengal's Sima Fein, the Swadeshi Movement, when he realised that the British were about to divide his native Bengal along religious lines. He soon rejected the movement because of its fascist tendencies, much to the chagrin of Bengal's Hindu nationalists.

The ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), or more precisely some of the paramilitary groups associated with it, is vaguely reminiscent of the Swadeshi Movement. But there is an important difference: Hindu chauvinist militias are not interested in getting elected, but to the BJP what matters is winning seats in the Indian parliament. Tagore founded Shantiniketan as a retreat for meditation and learning — an experiment that stood apart from the overriding concerns of the day. Tagore's fanatical co-religionists and their Muslim counterparts found no shelter there. "So many things that are fashionable today but were unheard of in those days were all there in [Shantiniketan]," the late Indian premier Indira Gandhi said in 1982.

The spiritual allure of India with all its crippling problems held, and still does hold, a puzzling sway over the Western imagination. It is this moral dominion, uniquely symbolised in democracy religiously practised in spite of deprivation, that must at all costs be protected from political struggles masquerading as religious and communal strife. The religious and communal strife. The world watches India for inspiration. Myron Phelps was one of the first Western disciples of Tagore in Shantiniketan — the Abode of Peace. When communal

conflict ravaged Calcutta, Rudyard Kipling's *City of Dreadful Night*, and raged throughout the Bengali countryside, Shantiniketan remained literally an abode of peace. Of Shantiniketan, Mahatma Gandhi once said, "I think what I learnt most at Shantiniketan was the ability to live quietly within myself no matter what was happening outside."

Kipling's *City of Dreadful Night* is today re-enacted in the troubled Muslim-majority state of Kashmir where elections which have taken place in the rest of the country were delayed until today. Last Monday, a four-day state-wide strike was ordered by Kashmiri *hurrriyat*, or freedom, parties struggling for a merger with the neighbouring Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Militant Islamist groups like *Harakat Ul-Momineen*, the Believers Movement, also called for a boycott of today's elections. Campaigning by candidates was curtailed by Kashmiri separatists who claimed that New Delhi-sponsored candidates were pandering around the Kashmiri capital Srinagar in bullet-proof four-wheeled drive vehicles, ringed by Indian security forces in a provocative show of force. The world — and in particular the Muslim world — watches how India handles the kerfuffle in Kashmir.

"Pakistan wants to live in peace in South Asia, but Kashmir is the source of all tension between Pakistan and India," declared Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sardar Asef Ali in Islamabad last week. The relationship between Muslims and Hindus in India has traditionally involved a measure of friction. Communal conflict has often been compounded by the fact that Pakistan, Iran and other predominantly Muslim nations have taken a keen interest in the affairs of India's large Muslim minority. One manifestation of this is the unending war of words over the Kashmiri people's right to national self-determination.

"Democracy is a numbers game. It's not in our favour," declared Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Vajpayee's BJP finished first in elections a fortnight ago but fell short of a majority in the 545-member lower house of Par-

liament, the Lok Sabha. The BJP won 194 seats in the Lok Sabha; the leftist United Front and the Congress Party won 177 and 136 seats respectively. Tuesday's vote of no confidence in the BJP opened a new chapter in India's democratic experience. Vajpayee hinted that his party could have "cobbled together a majority by buying deputies" but did not. In a clear reference to the Congress Party's alleged corrupt practices, the BJP leader said, "We have seen how it was done [in the past]. That path was open to us as well and we have spurned it."

But minority religious rights and not the Congress's scandalous corruption record, it seemed, was uppermost in parliamentarians' minds. The Indian media colourfully depicted rowdy debate scenes in the Lok Sabha over the BJP's bid to end special legal privileges for India's Muslim minority. India has a unified and secular criminal code but the multi-religious nation does not have a uniform civil code. The 150 million Muslims of India are given exceptional rights to marry, divorce and leave inheritances according to the Islamic *Shari'a*. The BJP has vowed to institute a uniform civil code whereby privileges now enjoyed by Muslims would be removed.

Democracy in the Third World, as anywhere else, is more often than not about who controls the purse strings. In India the sheer number of the electorate counts. Dealers and speculators were hedging their bets on India fast developing into an open market economy under the BJP aegis. By and large, India's business community is enthusiastically supporting the BJP, even as the subcontinent's politicians struggle against the communal divisions that have put to the test the strength of India's political establishment. Indian equities at the Bombay Stock Exchange rose sharply as speculators celebrated the BJP's victory a couple of weeks ago.

Needless to say, speculators in neighbouring Pakistan's Karachi Stock Exchange have kept pace with the fast-moving fortunes of the BJP. Vajpayee's

assumption of power left the KSE100 index down some 2.2 per cent. Last Tuesday's vote of no confidence worked wonders for the KSE. The prospects of a Hindu chauvinist government staying on in power had alarmed the Pakistanis. "Certain aggressive statements have come out in a threatening nature ... and we cannot remain unconcerned," warned the Pakistani foreign minister in Islamabad last week.

Today the BJP's political fortune appears to be cursed precisely because of its fanatical crusade to end India's vibrant cultural and religious pluralism. While a large segment of the Indian business community welcome the nationalistic orientation of the BJP's economic policies, most foreign investors are weary of the party's agenda. They would rather deal with Congress or the leftist parties. Islamic jurisdiction in the private domain just as much as interest in India's privatisation programmes tightened the noose around the BJP government's neck.

Congress has pledged full support for the leftist United Front alliance, but will not be forming part of the new ruling coalition. Former Premier Narasimha Rao, as leader of the second largest party in parliament, was asked by Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma to form a government. Rao declined, opting instead to defer to the leftist alliance's nominee H D Deve Gowda. These days many of India's old certainties are fast crumbling, but one fact remains: India's political establishment continues to be both pragmatic and pusillanimous. It is not surprising then that Deve Gowda is also chief minister of the southern Indian state of Karnataka — a state which has been a magnet for foreign investment and a showpiece of economic deregulation.

The vote of no confidence in the BJP proves that there is no room in India's political establishment for religious chauvinism and fanaticism. Secularism is the only guarantor of political stability and democracy in the South Asian subcontinent. Indian democracy has withstood the test of time and is paving the way for economic development.

## Ministry of Transport and Communications Egyptian Civil Aviation Authority

The Ministry of Transport and Communications wishes to construct an international airport at Marsa Alam complying with international civil aviation specifications.

The ministry invites investors and financial institutions to submit their offers to build and manage the new airport for a limited period to be determined in accordance with rules and regulations governing operations at international airports. The offers should completely observe the authority's documents of specifications and conditions.

Those wishing to submit their bids may request tender documents for LE1000 from the Office of the Chairman of the Board of the Egyptian Civil Aviation Authority, 6th Floor, at Cairo's International Airport Authority (above the VIP Lounge), from 15-30 June 1996.

## Al-Ahram Weekly

### A vote on the future

Faced with election campaigning manifesting itself in the form of a US-style media medley of propaganda, mud-slinging and voter registration and manipulation, Israelis, as they see it, go to the polls to choose between Peres' political pragmatism or Netanyahu's ideological zealotry. It has been, for the most part, an issues campaign — peace versus security, a "New Middle East" versus Israeli political isolationism.

Unwilling to appear too passive, Peres jumped on the right-wing's security bandwagon, closed off the borders to Palestinian workers, bombarded Lebanon and, perhaps, won some votes as a result. He claims, however, that his re-election is the key to concluding successful rounds of peace negotiations. Arafat, for the most part, agrees.

Netanyahu, eager to distance himself from the extremist right-wing elements responsible for the death of Rabin, has courted not only the moderates, but also the Israeli Arabs — hawking his vision of peace to all who are interested. Peace, according to Netanyahu is secondary to Israeli security.

It has, unfortunately, already taken a back seat — if only temporarily. Campaigning has usurped Peres' time over the last few months. But apparently not enough to prevent him from indirectly commissioning and orchestrating the deaths of over 100 refugees in Qana. The final status negotiations, begun some weeks ago in Taba, have also fallen victim to election fever. Suspended after only two days, they are set to reconvene after the elections. Their tone and direction, however, is likely to be affected by the Israeli electorate's choice for prime minister.

The inter-party politicking that went on prior to the elections only belies the main issue. Israelis are not simply voting for a prime minister with either hawkish or dovish inclinations; they are casting a vote for the future, one to be shaped by a reluctance for peace or a commitment to it.

This is the distinction that must be kept in mind as the peace process is re-launched. The vision of the future, whether seen through Netanyahu's sunglasses or Peres' nebulous pragmatism, must not be obscured by rhetoric or destroyed by self-gratifying subjugation.

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# Deeper illuminations

Last week, **Ismail Serageddin** remarked upon the sterility of the tradition vs. modernity debate. In this, the second part of his discussion, he argues for dissent, and other marks of freedom

Edward Said, the quintessential Arab intellectual, has carefully argued the need for the intellectuals to maintain a critical posture towards society generally and the state specifically. This is how they acquire the legitimacy to create a climate of thought that permeates a culture. This is how they can maintain the moral consistency that recognises the indivisibility of basic human rights, the need to defend the freedoms of those with whom we disagree. It is here that the sense of values comes to the fore. While celebrating the specificity of Arab culture or the Muslims' heritage, I can see these as our contribution to the larger universal heritage of humanity, an essential contribution that enriches all human beings and shapes their universal values. It is a contribution without which the world would be much poorer.

To do this, Arab intellectuals must create the space of freedom necessary for the articulation of the mirrors and windows that shape the boundaries of our minds, where "we" end and "they" begin. This is how culture is defined.

This view of the self and the other is at the heart of the intolerance and terrorism within which Arab intellectuals live as a national reality. The global reality in which Arab intellectuals live, on the other hand, consists of an enormous and frightening knowledge gap and the risks inherent therein.

There is a vast and growing gap between North and South in the production and availability of scientists and engineers (3,800 per million population in the North as against less than 200 in the South in 1990). The Arab world has no exception to this remarkable inequity. Furthermore, many of our scientific and technological institutions are deprived of equipment and supplies, and have been stripped of their standards of excellence in the service of political expediency and cronyism. We are

still struggling with basic laboratory equipment needs at a time when the North is mainstreaming computers for the average person to use as simply as telephones.

Yet ill-equipped as we are, we are confronted by an amazing information explosion. In the United States alone, there are 14,000 magazines published for the general public. Over 55,000 trade books are published annually — that is, one book every 10 minutes, not counting specialised journals and scientific publications. The volume of literature in the Library of Congress doubles once every 14 years and, at the rate things are going, will soon be doubling every seven years. In some fields, such as environmental management in developing countries, the number of publications doubles every 18 months.

Matching this information explosion is the explosion in computing and communications. Telecommunications reach the furthest corners of the globe. There were 1,025 computers directly connected to the Internet in 1984; 10 years later, there were 3.8 million. A billion e-mail messages pass between 35 million users, and the volume of traffic on the Internet doubles every 10 months.

For the next ten years, information will be everywhere around us, and with simple and inexpensive tools the most remote locations will not be excluded from tapping into it. We can leapfrog some of the slow location-specific patterns of development of science and knowledge accumulation to which earlier generations were forced to adhere. PCs and network hook-ups will be as cheap and available as transistor radios are today. Never before has need for our scientific enterprise been greater, and never before has the potential for its success been as present as it is today.

Yet as the world explores the marvels of genetic science, breaks down the secrets of the

atom, reaches to the stars and calculates the age of the oldest rocks, we debate the minutiae of jurisprudence, wonder whether a woman's nail polish prevents her from accomplishing complete ablutions, regard novelty with suspicion and attempt to set up barriers wherever our minds may wander.

Pouring money into Arab universities will not transform them into the "centres of excellence" in science and technology that are required. Far from it. What is called for is a rethinking of the university as a vector of social change in our modernising societies, in the rapidly changing world environment of today.

This will require liberating the Arab mind from the fear of the different, the new and the foreign, and promoting the respect of diversity in a shared collectivity. These are values inherent in the scientific outlook, which promotes bonds that transcend race and culture and reshapes culture within the broader, more tolerant framework that true scientific enterprise both requires and engenders.

It is a profound challenge. Paradoxically, this challenge can only be met by promoting the scientific outlook throughout society. The scientific outlook helps in the modernisation (as opposed to the "Westernisation") of society, and that kind of modernisation will strengthen the capacity of universities to play their full role in the humanisation as well as science. As universities play their full societal role, they will further promote the scientific outlook.

Science, in Bronowski's words, is "the organisation of our knowledge in such a way that it commands more of the hidden potential in nature." According to this definition, it is clear that science goes far beyond the utilitarian application of knowledge. It impacts on an entire world outlook, from cosmology to being. It is an enterprise that forces upon its practitioners values

and outlooks peculiar to science and that in essence are the keys to modernisation.

Values are not rules. They are, in Bronowski's beautiful phrase, "...those deeper illuminations in whose light justice and injustice, good and evil, means and ends are seen in fearful sharpness of outline." This is a critical idea in the context of the intolerant debate that permeates so much of public discourse in the Arab world today, where individuals are judged by the colour of their skin, or the god they choose to worship, or the ethnic group into which they were born, or even their gender.

The essence of development is a deep humanism. Humanism is itself defined by a set of profound values which, to my mind, require the scientific outlook and the values of science. Sadly, there are many who fear this view in the Arab countries today. The rise of intolerant fundamentalism is a manifestation of this fear, which starts from a view that concepts of values — justice and honour, dignity and tolerance — have an inwardness which is not accessible to experience. Accordingly, because they believe that there is no rational foundation for values, they fear that an appeal to logic can lead only first to irreverence and then to hedonism.

Science values originality as a mark of great achievement. But originality is a corollary of independence, of dissent against received wisdom. It requires challenging the established order, and the right to be heard however outlandish the assertion, subject only to the test of rigorous method.

Independence, originality, and therefore dissent — these are the hallmarks of the progress of contemporary civilization. "Dissent is the mark of freedom, as originality is the mark of independence of mind."

The writer is vice-president of the World Bank for environmentally sustainable development.

## A very close race

Never have Israeli elections been more important at the entire regional level, and never have their results been more unpredictable. **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** comments

When I decided to devote my column this week to the Israeli elections, I was faced with the quandary of writing about an event before it occurred, while the outcome of the election will be known. The reason I chose this rather than any other subject is that I wanted to try and identify the constant factors in the Middle East equation, that is, those which will not be affected by the outcome of the elections, without being influenced by whether the Israelis chose Peres or Netanyahu as their next prime minister.

To my mind, the most important of these factors is the panic occasioned in western capitals by the series of Hamas suicide bombings inside Israel, which threatened to derail the entire peace process. In an attempt to get it back on track, the Sharm El-Sheikh summit convened at the personal initiative of US President Clinton. The summit expressed the determination of the great powers and the regional leaders to pursue the process and set in place mechanisms that would stand as symbols of its survival, despite the fact that negotiations had been suspended until the Israeli elections.

For the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, a public display of support for the peace process was also a public display of support for Peres against both the Likud rival in Israel and the forces branded as terrorist throughout the Arab world. The Arab participants at the summit were ready to condemn the Hamas suicide operations in Israel as terrorist acts, but could hardly do so when it came to Hezbollah as long as the Israeli continued to occupy a part of Lebanon's territory in open defiance of a Security Council resolution. Their reluctance was further vindicated

when the Israeli military intervention in Lebanon, purportedly aimed exclusively at Hezbollah activists, claimed scores of civilian casualties. The Qana massacre dealt a death blow to the whole logic of Sharm El-Sheikh, and enhanced Hezbollah's stature as a resistance movement which fought against impossible odds for the sake of Arab dignity. As such, it could not be perceived by Arab public opinion as a source of panic.

Peres's attempt to use the Sharm El-Sheikh rationale as a fig-leaf for his Grapes of Wrath operation backfired badly. Not only did it fail to deepen the rift between Arab public opinion and Arab "terrorism", but it also blurred the distinction between his allegedly peace-oriented moderate line and Netanyahu's security-oriented tough line. Peres's motto has become "peace with security", while Netanyahu's is "security with peace". Both admit that the key ingredients are peace and security, the only difference between them being which comes first, that is, which can eventually be sacrificed for the other. Actually, the two ingredients are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Nor can we discount the possibility of a national coalition government led by today's winner working out a peace-and-security formula agreeable to both.

Trumpeted as the main event in the run-up to the elections, last Sunday's televised debate between Peres and Netanyahu turned out to be a non-event, with the arguments advanced by each convincing only the converted. Following Rabin's assassination, the traditionally no-holds-barred style of Israeli political discourse, which was accused of providing a breeding ground for terrorists like Yigal Amir,

has been noticeably toned down, as illustrated by the unusually restrained election campaigns conducted by candidates for Knesset seats. This tacit understanding between Israeli commanders to maintain a degree of sobriety in their political discourse is met by a similar understanding among the Palestinians to maintain minimum contacts between prominent figures such as Hamas founder, Sheikh Yassin, now serving a life sentence in Israel, and Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat.

All these imperatives made it difficult to predict the outcome of yesterday's elections, which seems to have been decided less by the organised political forces on either side than by those who remained undecided until the very last moment. These included the Israeli Arabs, who constitute some 12 per cent of the electorate and were assumed to be a reserve force for Peres, and the Russian immigrants, who now number nearly one million and were assumed to favour Netanyahu. In fact, the situation is more complex. Most of the East European immigrants, grouped around former right-wing Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky, are Ashkenazi Jews whose traditional bulwark is the Labour Party. As to the Israeli Arabs, they have been enjoined by the most prominent Islamic leaders in Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon, Tunis, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Punjab to boycott the elections. If they heed their call then, whatever Peres's efforts to convince Arafat to have them vote for him, they will effectively have helped Netanyahu.

The big question is the Clinton Administration's stand on all these imperatives; will it go on supporting

Peres or eventually encourage the formation of a national coalition government? The Arabs accuse the Clinton administration of going further than any previous American administration in supporting Israel. But if it is true that American policy towards the Middle East is to a very great extent determined by the American Jewish lobby, and that this lobby does not necessarily support Labour against Likud, it is also true that Clinton's support of Israeli policy has been support for Labour's peace line specifically.

If Netanyahu is elected, he will not recognise a sovereign Palestinian state. This was also the position of Labour before the PLO relinquished the provisions of its Charter interpreted by Israel as calling for its destruction. But now that the Palestinian National Council has revoked these provisions, would the Clinton administration support an Israeli government which would continue to treat the Palestinian Authority as a hostile party that has not committed itself to peaceful co-existence with Israel? What applies to Palestinian sovereignty in general would have to apply to sovereignty over Jerusalem.

By refusing to abort the peace process in the name of Israel's security, Peres allows the US to support Israel unconditionally without jeopardising its petroleum and geostrategic interests in the Arab world. By giving precedence to security over peace, Netanyahu makes it difficult for Clinton to reconcile the two elements of his two-pronged Middle East policy. That is why we can assume that supporting the Peres line is a constant and not a variable of the Clinton administration's policy.

## Summer by the sea

By **Naguib Mahfouz**

I first visited Alexandria, Egypt's second capital, in 1920, spending two weeks at San Stefano. How well I remember the beach there, divided into two sections, one for men and the other for women. Children would use the ladies' beach, where the slope was gentler and the water shallower. In those days the entrance fee was two piastres, a sum which included the rental of a bathing suit together with, if needed, a gourd, which one would use much in the same way as an inflatable life belt, holding on to it to keep one's head above water. The sea by the men's beach was much rougher, and the waves would occasionally knock over the swimmers, my father included.

I remember returning home from my first trip to Alexandria, dark as charcoal and so changed that at first my mother did not recognise me.

During my secondary school years, between 1925 and 1930 I went to Alexandria every year with my friends. My father would give me ten pounds, which covered all the expenses for food, lodging and entertainment. My uncle, I remember, would become upset at such extravagance, and accuse my father of spoiling me, since ten pounds was far more than I would have earned had I been a graduate in his first job.

Based on an interview with Mohamed Salmawy.

### The Press This Week

**Rose El-Youssef:** "The novel and amusing aspect of the battle over the present press law, is the balance of power it displays. On one side, there are the journalists backed by the intelligentsia and the people, though their backing is not expressed in action. On the other side, there is this great army, which is in exclusive possession of the country's economic, social and institutional capacities — an army with a deeply-rooted anti-democratic political heritage, for which freedom of the press has always been an object of attack."  
(Abdel-Sattar El-Tawila, 27 May)

**Al-Shaabi:** "Dialogue with this government over an integrated plan aimed at guaranteeing press freedom is an impossible venture. We should focus on one thing alone, and that is to escalate mass action to abrogate Law 93, and refrain from being side-tracked into the quagmires of the two [Shura and People's] councils, one of which is appointed and the other, rigged."  
"I am not certain whether I shall be writing next Tuesday... therefore and just in case, I bid my dear readers farewell."  
(Magdi Ahmed Hussein, 24 May)

[On Tuesday Hussein was sentenced to one year imprisonment for violations of Law 93, with the sentence suspended for three years]

**Al-Akhbar:** "A shackled and muzzled press is worthless... A frightened press enjoys no respect. Journalists who kneel before rulers cannot stand up to oppression, fight spoliation and pillage or expose corruption. They look upon rulers as does a prey upon its hunter. They would not speak unless permitted to nor would they open their mouths unless ordered to."  
(Mustafa Amin, 27 May)

**Al-Arabi:** "Genuine democracy is the real issue... The journalists know that the battle over press freedom is part of a national battle... The disreputable law [93] was not issued to be put to sleep, but to put the whole nation to sleep. What is needed now is a decisive political decision that puts a stop to the farces currently being enacted in the form of a new draft law, abrogate the disreputable law issued a year ago and initiate a responsible dialogue with all the country's political forces with a view to bolstering democratic construction and safeguarding Egypt from the

### Hawk days

mighty storms lashing at it both from inside and outside."  
(Galal Aref, 27 May)

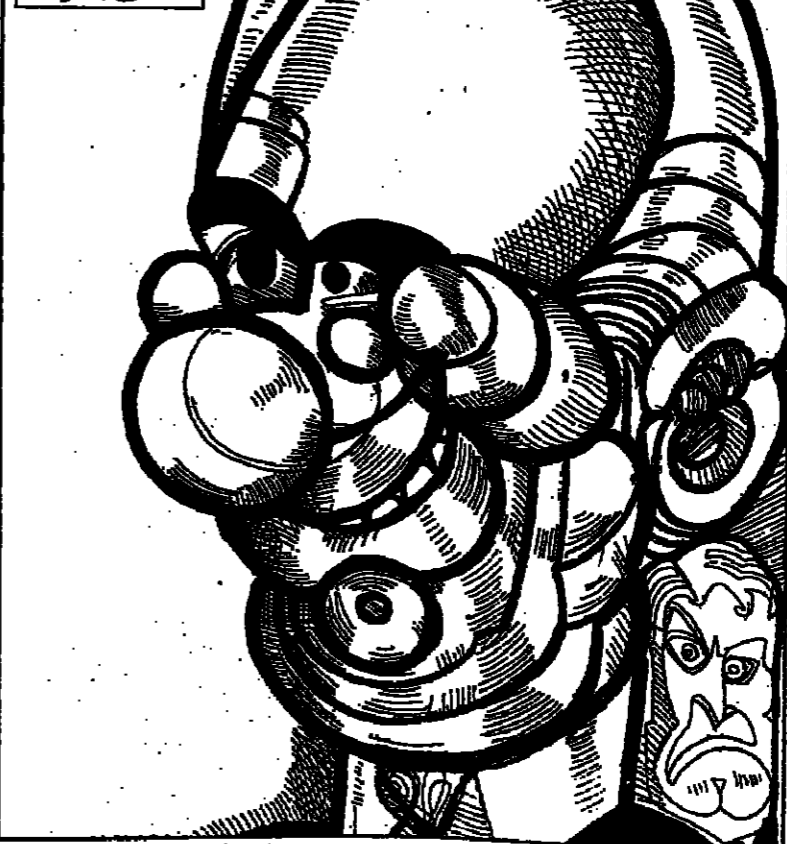
**Al-Ahram:** "Shackling and muzzling the press is like removing the brakes of a car and then putting an extremely near-sighted person in the driving seat. A major crash is inevitable... Marginalisation of the press can only lead to marginalisation of the country itself."  
(Ahmed Bahgat, 28 May)

**Al-Gomhouria:** "A degree of variance exists between European and American interests. The US wishes to monopolise both war and peace. It will pursue its current policies to the last barrel of Arab oil and the last Katyusha rocket. This explains its total and overt bias to Israel during the war in Lebanon."  
(Kamel Zouheri, 25 May)

**October:** "Following his visit to the US, [presidential advisor] Dr Ossama El-Baz said that Egypt and the US enjoy relations of friendship and cooperation, though they also have disagreements. To my mind, the main area of disagreement between Egypt and the US is that in so far as Israel is concerned, Clinton is 'a very well behaved boy'. He is exactly the opposite when it comes to the Arabs. The question is: Will the US ever discharge fair and balanced policies towards both parties, even if after the elections?"  
(Ragab El-Bana, 26 May)

**Al-Akhbar:** "The most curious thing about the Israeli election is that it is a competition over extremism. Each candidate is convinced that his electoral chances improve the more hawkish his garb appears, the more times he says no, and the more he stresses the dangers threatening Israeli security and interests."  
(Nabil Zaki, 26 May)

**Al-Arabi:** "Most Arab regimes have put their eggs in Peres' basket. As if the Labour Party's Peres is any different from Likud's Netanyahu. Can they forget that all Israel's wars against the Arabs were conducted under Labour governments, including the last war in Lebanon launched by the same Peres who is so dear to humiliating-settlement-Arabs?"  
(27 May)



The eyebrows of Moshe Dayan, the lips of Begin, the nose of Rabin — together they form the new face presented by Shimon Peres. But behind his shoulders lurks a new mask, that of Netanyahu, Peres' erstwhile rival whose choice as the Likud's candidate in the prime ministerial elections looks suspiciously like a ploy to present Peres as a moderate. Yet both faces are in fact the same, both topped by a silvery wig that disguises the non-choice presented to Arab voters.

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## Close up

Salama A. Salama

### The cutting off of hands

The televised debate between Shimon Peres, the Labour candidate, and Netanyahu, the Likud Party candidate, scheduled for the final run up to the Israeli elections demonstrated just how shaky are the foundations on which the peace process rests. Indeed, one was left wondering just what kind of choice the Israeli electorate is being asked to exercise since the differences between the two candidates appeared at best marginal.

The insubstantial nature of these differences are clearly reflected in the opinion polls. Both before and after the debate the two candidates were running neck and neck. Whoever wins the elections, it appears, will do so by the narrowest of margins. Peres, despite American support, cannot be counted the front runner.

The actual fall out of the elections, though, will depend less on who emerges victorious at the polls than on the alignment of political forces on which the victor will have to depend in governing the country, and in discussing the future course of the peace process. The picture is further complicated by the fact that, for the first time in Israel's history, the vote for prime minister and for the Knesset will be split.

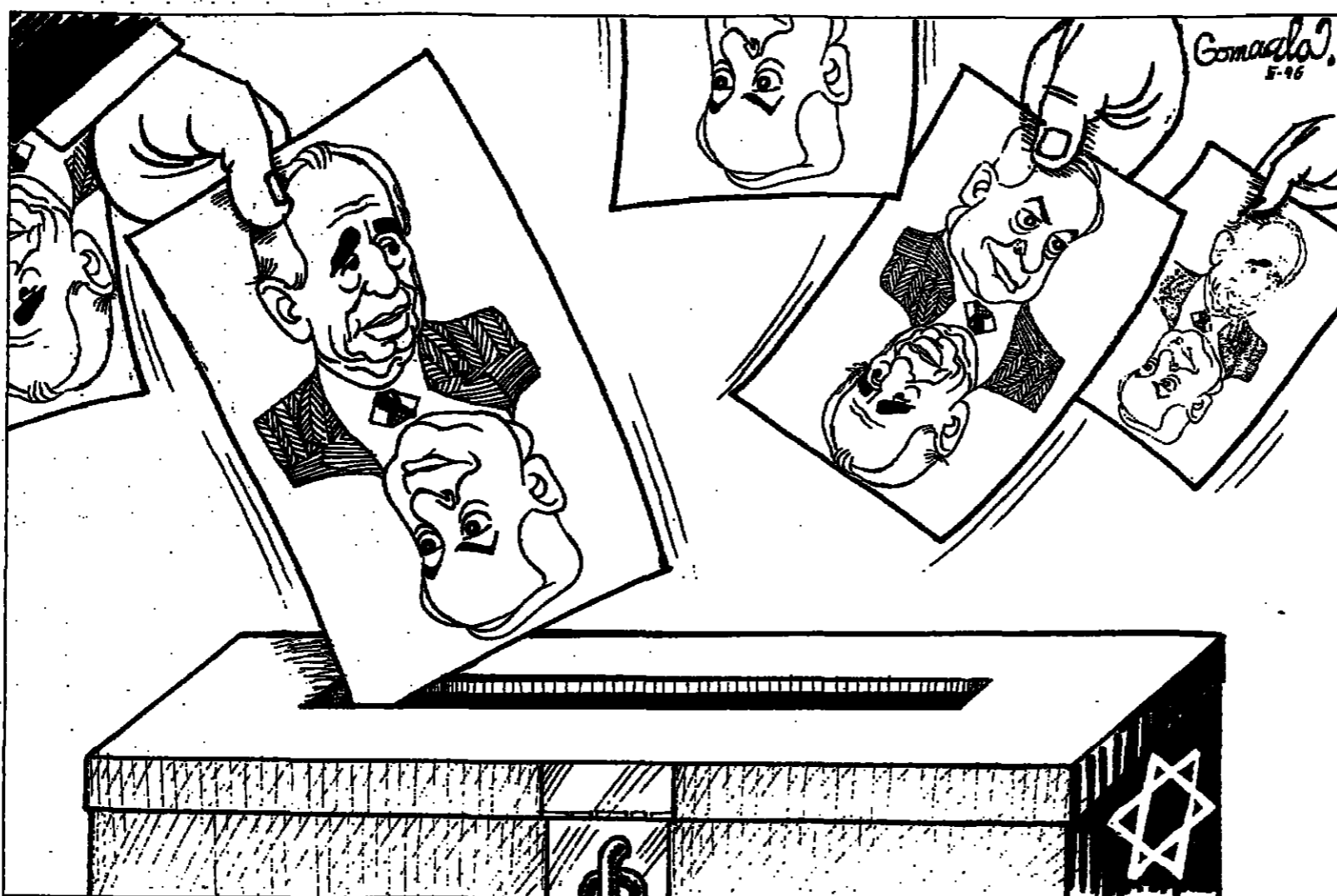
While it is true that the Israeli electorate has never awarded an overwhelming majority to either Labour or Likud and that the prime minister elect is not, in forming his government, entirely dependent on the backing of blocs and parties in the Knesset, it is equally true that no prime minister can afford to alienate minority parties, particularly when it comes to the peace process and final phase negotiations.

Peres was clearly endeavouring to narrow the differences between his position and that of Netanyahu, especially over the issue of Jerusalem, when he said he would cut off his hand before agreeing to divide the city. He also stated that he would not be antagonistic to the holding of a referendum over the Golan issue in an attempt to defuse any differences with the Likud position which, in the debate, emerged clearly as one of withdrawal.

To predict the result of the Israeli elections this side of the poll is a fool's game. The real problem, though, facing those Arabs who have put their hopes on Peres' ability to continue the peace process is the very real possibility of Netanyahu winning and Likud obtaining a majority in Parliament.

Egypt — and Arafat — have insisted that they are ready to cooperate with any person enjoying the confidence of the Israeli people, even Netanyahu. This, of course, begs a question: On what basis will they then deal with the Israeli government? Will it be on the basis of "land-for-peace", the same basis Peres worked so hard to subvert and to by-pass whenever necessary, or on the basis of "security-for-peace", the call sounded by Netanyahu in his pre-election speeches?

In the run up to the elections one point at least has become clear. Whether the elections result in a win for Peres or Netanyahu, the peace process will have to be completely reviewed. Other questions, though, will remain unanswered until both the identity of the new prime minister is known as well as the composition of his power base in the Knesset. And then, of course, there is the American position, post elections, to consider.



## Soapbox

### Beyond the veneer

The Third World is characterised by vast discrepancies in the distribution of wealth, with a small fraction of the population controlling a large proportion of the national income whilst the overwhelming majority live on the poverty line. As a result of this, attempts to implement liberal democracy are invariably doomed, since the status quo reduces elections to no more than a squabble among the elite as to who should have the right to govern. Despite their presence on the electoral register, the poor, the *fellahin* and women are effectively disenfranchised.

What is needed, then, is to elaborate the definition of democracy if it is ever to be a workable entity in the Third World, for without enfranchising the vast majority — in ways other than simply granting them a vote — the concept will remain meaningless.

Participation is the key to the dilemma, increased participation across the board. But to facilitate popular political participation it is necessary to ensure that the mechanisms are in place that will guarantee greater economic and social equity.

Parliament can only be deemed truly representative when it embraces the whole of society and not, as is the case in Egypt, when membership is the prerogative of a narrow class.

Until the social and economic dimensions of human and civil rights are fully acknowledged, including the right to free education and health care and access to work and lodging, then the electorate will remain no more than a series of statistics, important only during election time. Until we have worked towards a position where direct popular representation is the norm rather than the exception, in the workplace, in local as well as national administration, then democracy, however "liberal" it appears, will remain no more than a veneer.



This week's Soapbox speaker is a member of the general secretariat of the Tagammu' Party. **Abdel Ghaffar Shukur**

# The right image

Poised for economic take off, Egypt now needs to learn fast how to project a proper image of its many assets abroad. Marketing Egypt, writes Ibrahim Nafie, is today's key to tomorrow's prosperity



I predict that 1996 will be the year we begin to reap the harvest of 15 years of economic and fiscal reform. All economic indicators give reason for optimism that the Egyptian economy has started on an upward swing. It is up to us to optimise this trend. We need to work with utmost persistence and dedication toward raising production, export and investment rates, opening new markets for Egyptian exports and creating a more favourable climate for private sector initiative and innovation.

Egypt's cultural, geographical and historical advantages need to be fully utilised in order to attract domestic and foreign investment and to market Egypt as a centre for investment and tourism. The more adept a country is at marketing itself abroad by projecting a positive and dynamic image, the greater is its potential to develop as a centre for investment, tourism or transit commerce, or to augment the flow of its exports to markets abroad.

In fact, marketing Egypt regionally and internationally is key to its integration into the world economy from a position of strength and equity. Egypt needs to project its true image as a promising regional economic power, standing on the threshold of economic take-off. This is extremely vital. For in spite of the fact that Egypt initiated its open-door policy 22 years ago and has been implementing an effective economic reform programme since 1991, it has yet to obtain its full share of Arab and foreign investments. By mid-1995 total non-Arab foreign investment in Egypt had not exceeded LE5,375 million, while total Arab investments stood at LE4,856 million. In contrast, Arab investments abroad, in countries outside the Arab world, exceed \$800 billion.

To illustrate how much Egypt is losing by not marketing itself appropriately it is sufficient to mention that China was able to attract direct investments worth approximately \$135 billion by the end of 1995 and an additional \$135 billion worth of investments by virtue of agreements that have yet to be implemented. We have little cause to wonder at this. China excels in marketing itself abroad.

The economic climate in Egypt is no less favorable, and is indeed more liberal, than that of China. Yet, China has demonstrated a remarkable acumen for self-promotion and its representatives abroad have been indefatigable in promoting investment in their country. We cannot say the same about Egypt, at least over the past few years.

Yet, if Egypt is to market itself effectively, should it project an exaggerated image of itself as some other, Arab and non-Arab countries in the region do? Absolutely not, if Egypt is to retain its credibility and acquire the continued respect and confidence of others. Nor is there any need to do so. Egypt's current economic situation is very positive. Indeed, it is sufficiently positive to create an image 10 times better than the prevalent impressions generated by distortions of Egypt's reality and unjustified pessimism.

The starting point of our marketing strategy, therefore, is to project an accurate picture of our current situation. Central to this is the high degree of political stability our country enjoys. Stability is the keystone of a healthy economic climate and essential to attracting tourism and investment.

It is regrettable, therefore, that some foreign press agencies have exploited minor incidents in Egypt to portray an image of political instability and lack of security. Yet, even in the midst of these events, Egypt was able to belie this misrepresentation and reaffirm its record as one of the most secure and stable countries in the world, even when compared to the US

and many countries in Western Europe.

Non-Egyptians who have been exposed to our culture are struck by its openness and tolerance, by the way Egyptians are able to accept and positively interact with "others", irrespective of their ethnic origin and religious and cultural affiliations. This factor alone, if marketed effectively, should act as a substantial incentive for tourism and investment.

Economic stability, based on economic liberalism, is another Egyptian asset that needs to be properly projected. A liberal economy, having evolved gradually during the past two decades, has established firm roots in Egypt in the past five years. This is a particularly fertile ground in which foreign investment can flourish, sufficient to transform Egypt to a center of commerce and a major pole of international tourism. But, in order to market this aspect of Egypt effectively, we must stress the liberal legal framework under which our economy operates and which offers a key incentive to foreign investment.

In addition to these economic, political and cultural advantages, there is yet another which our marketing strategy should emphasise. This lies in Egypt's enormous and diverse work force, ranging from unskilled labourers to highly-skilled experts and technicians whose knowledge and training compares favourably with those of their counterparts anywhere in the world, and whose expertise covers the full range of economic enterprise. And at salary scales considerably more modest than their counterparts in many other countries in this region, not to mention the industrialised and newly industrialised nations.

The net productive capacity of Egyptian labour, calculated by subtracting wages from gross value of production, gives it an excellent competitive edge over other regional and international labour forces. This should offer particularly enticing prospects to foreign entrepreneurs concerned with maximising their profits. Indeed, the net productivity of Egyptian labour has already attracted several Korean companies to establish their assembly lines in Egypt.

Potential entrepreneurs should also be enticed by the relatively low tax scales in Egypt, not to mention very favourable tax exemptions on investment activity, particularly in the field of modern technology. In addition, foreign enterprises operating in Egypt enjoy considerable leeway in transferring their profits abroad, indeed, far more leeway than that provided in many of the recently

industrialised nations of the Far East.

Nor should we overlook the fact that Egypt is situated at the conjunction of the world's major communications networks. This strategic location puts Egypt in a position to play an influential role in the international and regional economy as a centre for transit trade and finance. It also qualifies Egypt as a target for investment in export commodities due to the potential savings, by virtue of its central location, in terms of transportation and insurance costs. For example, if a Japanese company wanted to export its goods to Europe, the Middle East or Africa it could make the prices of its goods far more competitive by basing its production in Egypt and by cutting down on the heavy transportation and insurance costs entailed in exporting these goods directly from Japan.

The exchange rate of the Egyptian pound offers investors and tourists an additional incentive. The purchasing power of the pound in the Egyptian market is far higher, for example, than the purchasing power of the dollar in the US. According to a World Bank report on international development, the per capita share of the GDP in Egypt in 1993 was \$635 calculated on the basis of the exchange rate of the Egyptian pound against the dollar. The same report said that, for the same year, the per capita share of the GDP in Egypt calculated according to the actual purchasing power of the Egyptian pound against the dollar was \$3,780. In other words, for the same amount of money, an American investor can buy six times more worth of assets, goods and services in Egypt than he can buy in the US. This is not only a great incentive to Americans and others whose operations are based on dollars, but to many others as well, since the pound's low exchange rate against the dollar implies a low exchange rate against the world's other major currencies. One hardly needs to add that tourists too should be encouraged by the high purchasing power of the Egyptian pound.

Then, too, there is the vast Egyptian market consisting of some 60 million consumers whose buying power is steadily increasing. Egypt's Gross Domestic Product, calculated according to the purchasing power of the Egyptian pound versus the dollar, currently stands at \$213.2 billion. Also, according to IMF figures, Egypt's imports for 1994 were approximately \$15.4 billion. And, as Egypt continues to be integrated into the world economy we can expect this figure to multiply many fold over

the space of a few years. This is precisely what happened in China where its 1990 figure of \$53.9 billion worth of imports rose by 25 per cent over the following five years as of its rapid integration into the international economy and its speedy economic growth.

Since the beginning of the implementation of the economic reform programme in 1991, Egypt has also maintained a relatively low inflation rate. From 19.8 per cent in 1991, inflation diminished steadily over the next four years to 13.6 per cent, 12 per cent, 8.1 per cent and 7.5 per cent. This means that companies planning on investing in Egypt can make their profit projections with a higher degree of certainty and confidence than in many countries suffering from the fever of rocketing prices and a shaky economy.

Last but not least, Egypt provides an infrastructure that is well maintained and in the process of refurbishment and development, a factor that should certainly appeal to foreign businessmen and tourists.

These many advantages must be presented to the best effect abroad and there are many mechanisms readily available to us for this purpose. One is to link political with economic diplomacy, whereby meetings between Egyptian political officials with their foreign counterparts would be held in conjunction with meetings of Egyptian economic officials and businessmen and their foreign counterparts in order to promote different forms of economic cooperation and exchange. In addition, Egyptian diplomatic missions abroad should become more active in promoting Egypt in their host countries and in opening the channels of communications between foreign and Egyptian businessmen.

Another promotional mechanism is to set up permanent and seasonal trade exhibitions abroad. Not only will this help to acquaint foreign markets with Egyptian export products, it will promote links between Egyptian and foreign businessmen.

We must also, beyond doubt, organise an intensive publicity campaign, funded jointly by the government and Egyptian businessmen, in order to promote Egyptian-made products and tourism. At the same time, it would be extremely useful to enhance our relations with foreign press and media agencies, so as to ensure that Egypt's image is projected abroad with integrity.

Egyptian businessmen should also be encouraged to establish companies abroad that import Egyptian products into foreign markets. One cannot underestimate the contribution this would make to our national export trade, although, to optimise the benefits, this should be done according to a well-constructed and thoroughly researched export strategy that links products to potential markets.

In addition, we must be more pro-active in developing a policy of incentives in order to encourage major international companies to invest in Egypt. It is not sufficient to wait until they make the first move. It is up to us to target specific companies, whether in the field of agriculture, tourism or industry, and negotiate the most favourable terms for them and for ourselves.

Marketing Egypt is a task that must be undertaken jointly by the government and the private sector. A successful marketing campaign is in the interests of all. The fruits of our endeavors will spin off throughout all sectors of society, providing more employment opportunities, increasing the standards of living and realising the dignity and prosperity our country so richly deserves after years of struggling to overcome economic hardship.

## To The Editor

### Biased review

Sir—What does Jill Kamil have against Patrick Houlihan and her own publisher, the AUC Press? In her strangely biased review of Houlihan's "Animal World of the Pharaohs", she complains for the sake of complaining. The book is "not comprehensive", she writes; then, in the same breath, she grumbles that the 16-page bibliography is off-putting. If there are "hundreds of titles" on animals in ancient Egypt, Ms Kamil, how can you expect one book to be comprehensive?

To grouse that the author misleadingly quotes Clement of Alexandria is to have misunderstood, or not to have read, the passage in which the author clearly describes the ways in which the Greeks and Romans, and even the Egyptians, viewed animals. Capital letters are used for the names of species: Leopard, Giraffe, and Ostrich are species, elephant and baboon are not, although African Elephant and Hamadryas Baboon are. Dr Felicity M. Howlett, Mohandessin, Cairo

### Ghali's vision

Sir—In the *Weekly's* exclusive interview with Boutros-Ghali (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 23 May), the UN secretary-general proved himself to be both pragmatic and tactful providing an accurate picture of the new world order and the international arena. With regard to the future, he is a politician of vision.

He cited an old Egyptian proverb which illustrates the importance of power. It says that "He who has backing won't be hit in the stomach." The meaning behind this proverb is that those with strength are respected and deferred to while those who are weak are ignored.

Defining the attitude of the world community, Dr Boutros-Ghali added, "It is always difficult to find money for medicine, but it is easy to find money for a coffin." He went on to cite South Korea as an example of a country that has achieved progress in all domains and which will become a very important world power in the near future.

What remains to be seen is whether South Korea will support Boutros-Ghali for a second term. It would be the polite thing to do. However, the only real guarantee is that political decisions are taken with one's own best interests at heart.

Zarif Kamel Haskim, English language teacher, Cairo

### School stress

Sir—The state of the Egyptian education system is fast becoming a joke that just isn't funny any more. The state is supposed to provide free education. But the teachers employed by the state spend most of their official teaching time in school trying to get their pupils to have extra lessons with them — at exorbitant prices for mummy and daddy — rather than actually teaching them.

I have three sons, all of school-age. The eldest will do his *Thanawiyat Amma* examinations next year. What I have been discovering lately is that they just don't get taught their lessons at school. Children with richer parents than us use the classes at school as a chance to socialise with friends and to outdo one another in the level of surliness with which they mock their teachers.

In any other country in the world most children pester their parents to let them have the day off by sending a "doctor's" note to the school's headmaster. In Egypt we find children tugging at their parents' shoulder straps, demanding more time in the classroom with, what is worse, the presence of a personal tutor.

In any other country in the world, personal tutors are only ever considered by the richest echelons of society. In Egypt, ordinary parents on ordinary incomes are finding they are forced to fork out for education they set off in life thinking was free. Gamaladdin Saad, Cairo

## Reflections By Hani Shukrallah

### Option-free

The lack of alternatives seems to be the fundamental feature defining Arab reality on the threshold of a new century. It is the status quo's most powerful — indeed only — rationale. Behind the rhetoric of peace processes, political liberalisation processes, economic reform processes — the multitude of "historic processes" in which the bad vices with the ugly and the ugly with the horrible, the question: "What's the alternative?" rings with a deafening sound, silencing the sceptics and disarming the victims. Covering before its booming vibrations, issuing from a million loudspeakers turned up to full volume, Arabs are struck with amnesia, yesterday's massacre is wiped out by the fear of tomorrow's slaughter.

Semi-secular, semi-religious authoritarianism is justified by the threat of openly theocratic authoritarianism, human rights violations by the prospects of even worse and wider-scale violations, bad laws by even worse laws, bastions by direct military occupation, racism by more flagrant racism, oppression by harsher oppression, Peres by Netanyahu.

"After all, it was only a gang of Arabowshim [the Arab equivalent of Niggers, in Hebrew]," was how Israeli soldiers, talking to foreign correspondents, explained the massacre of 100 civilian men, women and children in Qana.

More interesting still, none of these choices are really the Arabs' to make. For all practical purposes, they are choices only in the academic sense of the word. Inexorable historical processes over

which the Arabs in fact have little or no control ultimately make of the options game a futile mental exercise whose only value is that of ideological justification. And this is a job to which today's Arab intelligentsia is ideally suited. If there is one thing that Arab power structures are adept at, it is the cooptation of Arab intellectuals. Putting one's intelligence, scholarly training and skills into the rationalisation of the status quo — analysing the various processes to smithereens, but staying well away from critiquing them — allows one to be creative, safe and, most probably, prosperous.

I believe it was Henry Kissinger who, in the '70s, said something to the effect that "a lack of options liberates the mind". In Kissinger's use, the liberating effect lay in embracing a debased and abject realism — forfeiting the shackles of memory, history, convictions and sense of justice and morality, and marching docilely towards one's fate, as decreed by an inexorable historical process. This lesson has since been learned all too well in the Arab world.

There is another way, however, in which a lack of options can liberate the mind — by opening the way to the imagination. To envisage a humane, genuinely democratic, moral and just future for the Palestinians and the Arabs, as well as for the Jews of Israel, to call for such a future, and to struggle towards it, is in fact no less dreamy or utopian than to expect anything good from the results, whatever they may be, of yesterday's Israeli elections.

# Old, famous and beautiful

David Blake on Yehudi Menuhin and the lightness of the passing years

Handel's *Messiah*: Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra; Kaunas State Choir; Yehudi Menuhin, conductor; Main Hall, Cairo Opera House; 24 May

He stands for life, a rock against a pandemic pessimism and the vanities and twaddle of the world. A rock, or at the very least an impenetrable armour. Nothing stands for long at the end of the murky century into which he was born, but he stands. Music stands and he was born music.

This explains all about him. He is a simple man, direct, to the point and calm. But never underestimate calmness: music is the toughest of the arts, an invincible flood, and its votaries are servants. Menuhin is one such, a hard-working survivor.

The world knows what is almost the logo of his life — the picture of the small, sturdy figure in a tam-o-shanter, grasping in each hand a piece of luggage, probably violins. At an age when most boys are school-ridden he was already travelling the world. He covered the continents before the jet age. This young person, the angel, sometimes in white knee-length trousers, expounded the inexplicable spaces of Bach with the ease and certainty of an avatar. A knock-out. No one ever stood beside him at this moment of his life except his father. He was alone on Einstein's beach, holding to nothing but Ariadne's thread of music to eternity. Moses struck the rock, and out came what? Water. And Yehudi, in those early days, with the bow of his violin struck the rock and out came Bach, Beethoven and Mozart.

The same person struck the rock last night and out came... the *Messiah*. In this era of his life it is difficult to keep to the "Lord" bit. Giving Menuhin the peacocks is like gilding a lily. At age 10, itinerant royalty with an empire of continents came to listen to him.

The phenomenon of Menuhin's fame, on this occasion, seemed more important than the music played. His fame has burgeoned until now, in this

age of hype; it moves into the strange stratospheric wonder world of Disney and Sony. Music alone confers this sort of fame upon a chosen few. The Beatles, Callas, Liszt, Horowitz, Toscanini, Beethoven, Apollo, they become indestructible, incandescent beyond the regions of ordinary humanity and far beyond even the reach of the nasty political demerits of the 20th century. They may smear but never destroy. Even the media before whom all tremble is unable to smother them.

For the Menuhin 80th birthday celebratory concert given at the Cairo Opera House, the *Messiah* of Handel was chosen. It is a big, unique musical machine architected by Handel, a genius at such things. It was grand opera before grand opera, and became an institution, especially in England where memories of Wilhelm Furtwängler and the Huddersfield Choral Society have become legend.

Everything for this performance was beautifully done. Grandiose it was not, though everything was finely graded down to the most muted and appealing pianissimos. The legatos were tender, the words of the four singers clearly heard and clearly phrased. The *Messiah* of thunder and lightning so beloved of most conductors was missing. This was an asset. We had a warning of the heart. It was a suave and friendly *Messiah* for such an occasion — right for the night — though, like George Eliot, it does go on a bit. This going on was eased by the speed and unity of the performance.

The Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra has a sweet and warm tone; the strings sing and the sounds they made were vibrant and intimate, not ornate or distant. There was nothing hollow or ornamental about them. The Kaunas State Choir went along the same lines; they too were into the words and meanings,

the sopranos bright and never cold.

The four principal singers fitted into this frame. A very beautiful thing occurred — by choosing an unheroic reading of this well-known and respected work, an established concert icon, Menuhin made it sound ageless, not exactly young, but never old and most particularly always of now. A new reading, it had great appeal and was simply moving. The singers gave involved, embracing performances.

Susan Roberts, a lovely American soprano with a clear and sympathetic voice, thrilling soft high tones, the technique always at the service of the words, was a passionate interpreter of the narrative. Likewise, the Rumanian mezzo, Liliana Bizineche-Eisinger never hooted or overpressed as many mezzos do in this music. The voice was dark, round, expressive and alluring. Tenor Algirdas Janutis has a northern voice, cool, sometimes white, but very musical and sympathetic. Benno Schollum, baritone, sang the great variety of his part with a full ringing tone and dramatic declamation. It is he who at the end calls the trumpets to action and the Lithuanian brass gave forth thrills and splendour without a shadow.

The singers, as is their custom in the *Messiah*, covered wide territory and managed the Handelian ornaments with ease. At times the two male voices

were set a fierce pace by the conductor, but kept to time. Menuhin is thoughtful to the singers. They were allowed their preeminence in the music, and he presented them with a nice courtesy, never really hurrying them or manoeuvring them into difficult endings.

So the *Messiah* party had come to the end. It thrilled as intended but with some additions. The man for whom the party was given was the cause. He seems always to have been right, not necessarily an enviable position, but the boy in white who began it all has become one of the bounties of the planet's musical life. And now his golden bowl is without a crack. He has gone into the land of luminous rhapsody.

Music is especially for the young and the old, and Menuhin occupied his rightful place. He almost dances. His step is light as a yogi's step. And there is something of the wordless charm and rightness about him that the great beings of the 1920s always had. They do everything right, even the shaking of the hand, with a style no one else possesses. His friend Bruno Walter had it. Menuhin is now, as they say, a legend: old, famous and beautiful, an elixir, moving around like Fred Astair. Nothing heavy, all is light. He is of the Gita. We must be thankful he is around, the living embodiment of something precious that has only one name — music.



## Listings

### EXHIBITIONS

Selwan Nouredin (Oils and Aquarels)  
Cultural Cooperation Council,  
11 Shagaret El-Dorr St, Zamalek. Tel 341 5419. Daily exc  
Fri. 10am-3pm & 4pm-9pm.  
Last day.

Nevine Adly Gaidi (Paintings)  
Verdi Hall, Marriott Hotel,  
Zamalek. 30 May, 8pm-10pm &  
31 May 11am-10pm.

Fathi Hassan (Paintings)  
Masrabiya Gallery, 8 Cham-  
pollion St, Downtown. Tel 778  
623. Daily exc Fri. 11am-8pm.  
Until 31 May.

Student Exhibition  
Ewart Gallery, Main Campus,  
AUC, El-Sheikh Riham St. Tel  
357 5436. Daily exc Fri & Sat.  
9am-9pm. Until 31 May.

Magdi Abdel-Aziz, Emam  
(Paintings) & Hassan Osman  
(Sculptures)  
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St,  
Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily  
10.30am-2pm & 3pm-6pm. Un-  
til 31 May.

Sayed Saadeddin (Paintings) &  
Mohamed Mandoor (Ceramics)  
Khan El-Maghrabi Gallery, 18  
El-Mansour Mohamed St, Zam-  
alek. Tel 340 3349. Daily exc  
Sun, 10.30am-3pm & 3pm-  
8.30pm. Until 31 May.

Restoration  
Opera House  
Grand St, Giza. Tel 340 6861.  
Daily 10am-10pm. Until 31  
May.

Group Exhibition  
Spiral Arts Gallery, 6 Rd 77C,  
Maadi. Tel 351 4362. Daily exc  
Sun, 10am-9pm. Until 1 June.  
Paintings of ten Egyptian artists,  
including Omar El-Nagdi, Ahmed  
Fouad Selim and Mustafa El-  
Razzaz.

Robert Gotskowski (Paintings)  
Netherlands Institute for  
Archaeology and Arabic Studies,  
1 Dr Mahmoud Azmi St,  
Zamalek. Tel 340 0076. Daily  
exc Sat & Sun, 9am-2pm. Until  
7 June.

Ghada Abu Ghazaleh (Paintings)  
Salama Gallery, 36A Ahmed  
Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346  
3242. Daily exc Fri, 10am-  
2.30pm & 5.30pm-9pm.  
Until 9 June.

Ingrid Galer (Paintings)  
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, 17  
Youssef El-Gundi St, Bab  
El-Louk. Tel 393  
1764. Daily exc Sun,  
12pm-5pm. Until 15  
June.

Javier Olaso, Lola Del  
Castillo, Youssef Basha  
za & Martin Recardo  
El-Hanager.  
Opera  
House Grounds, Giza. Tel  
340 6861. Daily  
10am-10pm. Until 15  
June.  
Paintings and graphic  
works.

Ministars  
Espace Gallery, 1 El-  
Sherifien St, Downtown.  
Tel 3931699. Daily exc  
Fri, 10am-2pm & 6pm-  
9pm. Until 18 June.  
Including works by Ab-  
del-Hadi El-Gazzar, Adel  
El-Said, Adham Wally  
and Gamal Abdel-Nasser  
among others.

The Museum of Mr and  
Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud  
Khalil  
1 Kalfour El-Akshid St, Dokki.  
Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon,  
10am-6pm.  
Egypt's largest collection of  
nineteenth century European art,  
amassed by the late Mahmoud  
Khalil, including works by  
Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin,  
Monet and Rodin.

Egyptian Museum  
Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575  
4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm;  
Fri 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.  
Outstanding collection of Phara-  
onic and Ptolemaic treasures  
and the controversial mummies  
room.

Coptic Museum  
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362  
8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm;  
Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.  
Founded in 1910, the museum  
houses the largest collection of  
Coptic art and artefacts in the  
world.

Islamic Museum  
Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St,  
Bab El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930.

190 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-  
4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-  
4pm.  
A vast collection of Islamic arts  
and crafts including mashrabiya,  
lustreware, ceramics, textiles,  
woodwork and coins, drawn  
from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid  
and Mameluke periods and other  
countries in the Islamic world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian  
Art  
Opera House Grounds, Giza.  
Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon,  
10am-1pm & 3pm-9pm.  
A permanent display of paint-  
ings and sculpture charting the  
modern art movement in Egypt  
from its earliest pioneers to lat-  
est practitioners.

Mohamed Nagui Museum  
Chateau Pyramide, 9 Mahmoud  
Al-Gundi St, Giza.  
A museum devoted to the paint-  
ings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-  
1956).

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum  
Tahrir St, Giza. Daily exc Sun  
and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.  
A permanent collection of works  
by the sculptor Mahmoud  
Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose gran-  
ite monument to Saad Zaghloul  
stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge.

### FILMS

Ronald et Juliette  
French Cultural Centre, Ma-  
draset El-Hoqueg El-Ferensiya  
St, Maadi. Tel 354 7679. 30  
May, 1pm.  
Directed by C Serreau (1989),  
starring Daniel Auteuil.

Commercial cinemas change  
their programmes every Mon-  
day. The information provided is  
valid through to Sunday after  
which it is wise to check with  
the cinemas.

Ya Dania... Ya Chamsal (My  
Life... My Passion)  
Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown.  
Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm,  
3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.  
Ramesses Hilton II, Corniche El-  
Nil St. Tel 374 7436. Daily  
10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm,  
6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.  
Rasy, Rasy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel  
258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm,  
6pm & 9pm. Thurs, 1pm, 3pm,  
6pm & 9pm. Daily 10.30am,  
3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Ra-  
dio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Down-  
town. Tel 575 6562. Daily  
10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.  
Magdi Ahmed Ali's debut film  
explores the intimate roles  
played by Leila Elwi, Elham  
Shahine and Hala Sedqi.

Top Dog  
El-Salam, 65 Abdel-  
Hamid Badawi St, He-  
liopolis. Tel 293 1072.  
Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm &  
9.30pm.

Braveheart  
Karam II, 15 Emadoddin St,  
Downtown. Tel 924  
830. Daily 10am, 1pm,  
3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

### MUSIC

Jazz-Flamenco  
El-Hanager.  
Opera House Grounds, Giza.  
Tel 340 6861. 31 May,  
8.30pm.  
The Sharikat group per-  
form with Mamei de  
Paula's singing and Nino  
Carrion's guitar.

Cairo Symphony Or-  
chestra  
Main Hall, Opera  
House, Giza. Tel 342  
0598. 31 May, 9pm.

The orchestra and the Cairo  
Opera Choir, conducted by Aldo  
Magnato, perform Gamal Abdel-  
Rehim's Introduction & Rondo  
"Baladi", "The Lotus Pond",  
"Hassan and Naima" and "El-  
Salwa" with baritone Reda El-  
Wakil, Bassam Abdel-Rehim (vi-  
olin), Kamel Salaheddin (cello),  
Nikolai Dilgov (oboe) and con-  
ductor Moustafa Nagui.

Cairo Opera Stars  
Small Hall, Opera House, at  
above. 31 May, 9pm.

All information correct at time  
of going to press. However, it  
remains wise to check with venues  
first, since programmes, dates  
and times are subject to change  
at very short notice.

Please telephone or send in-  
formation to Listings, Al-Ahram  
Weekly, Giza St, Cairo. Tel  
5786064. Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by  
Inji El-Kashef

## Theatre

### A wave of nostalgia

Nehad Seleiha watches as two directors take a daring leap into the past at the National and El-Hanager

In a city like Cairo, where repertory companies have become something of the distant past and where old plays, except for a few lucky ones, seldom get the chance of a revival, it is really a treat to be able to enjoy within the space of one month two vintage comedies from the inter-war period. *Yom El-Qiyama* (Doomsday), un-  
derwritten by Ashraf El-No'mani at El-Hanager Centre, is an opera (or, more properly, a light, romantic musical comedy) which dates back to the late thirties or early forties (no certain dates are available) and derives its interest and value from the lyrics of Bayram El-Tonsi, the great colloquial poet, and the score of Zakariya Ahmed. Two other composers are known to have collaborated with him, but only his airs and melodies have survived the one production of the work in 1945. One song in particular, "How Sweet Is Life", achieved such popularity that many people mistake it for a composition of the great Sayed Darwish: it has remained a bit ever since.

Despite the awesome, forbidding title, the day of reckoning plays no part in the plot and figures only as a rumour to justify the introduction of some street scenes and local characters set in Mameluke Cairo. The story could not be simpler and can be summed up as boy meets girl; the course of true love, however, is never smooth. The girl's father, a rich Turk, opposes the couple's marriage, preferring a wealthy suitor, but this obstacle is soon removed by the author of the script, Dr. Sabri Fahmy, who for lack of a better dramatic solution opts for the drastic one of promptly dispatching the suitor to the grave. It was an extremely hilarious moment indeed when suddenly, without any preliminaries, in the thick of the pater's vociferous opposition, some handy character rushed from the wings to announce that the hero's rival had conveniently died. Predictably, since both hero and heroine are constantly dogged by clownish confidants, the comedy ends with a double marriage. But sloppy and tattered as the plot is, it served the purpose and none of the audience seemed to mind its creakiness or illogical joints and jumps. The fact that the characters are simple, familiar types helps; as any puppeteer can tell you, stories work best

when the characters are kept simple. Indeed, *Doomsday* strikes me as eminently suited to the puppet theatre and in this production at El-Hanager it came across very much like a marionette show; and I mean this as a compliment to the director and his performers. Ali Fawzi (as the rigid father), Ashraf Mustafa (as the hero's uncle and confidant) and Mahmoud Zaki (as the cunning dervish and the lover's go-between) excelled in their farcical efforts, making a hilarious trio, and Salwa Abdel-Wahab and Amr Nagi (as the two lovers) sang beautifully and were delightfully light and frothy. To add to the pleasure of the evening, an element of cynical political irony, which could not have been foreseen by the author of the script, crept into the production. Dr. Sabri Fahmy had made his hero a Syrian and his heroine Egyptian to celebrate the dream of Arab unity, not knowing, of course, that 20 years later an attempt at a political marriage between Syria and Egypt would prove disastrous. In the light of this, rather than admire the author's "prophetic soul" the audience of today cannot but cynically wonder at the future of the lovers' union.

At the National, marriage, rather than romance, is the subject of Ahmed Shawqi's *El-Sit Huda* (Madame Huda) — the great poet's one attempt at writing a realistic verse comedy. The play is set in Cairo, in 1890, and revolves around the numerous marriages of the title character who is the exact opposite of the traditional romantic heroine. She is a wealthy, vain old bag, thickly painted, gaudily dressed and heavily bejewelled; with no children to remind her of the reality of her age, she insists she is 20 and conducts herself accordingly. She is not without charm, however, and under this ridiculous exterior we gradually discover a warm, generous woman, with a shrewd mind, a keen sense of humour and a vast appetite for life, men and human society. She is something of an artist too, with a rare talent for drawing verbal satirical sketches of the people around her. In our age, she

would make a wonderful cartoonist. In the long opening scene, her master-scene and the best in the play, we find her talking to a neighbour, chatting about the nine husbands she married (and buried) in the course of her life, and Ahmed Shawqi exploits the scene to satirise most of the respectable professions of his day, giving us through her a series of delicious caricatures. Here, rhyme and rhythm are used to enhance the wit and humour of the character-sketches, and classical Arabic loses its habitual formal tone, acquiring the flow and intonation of everyday speech.

Unfortunately, by the end of this scene, Ahmed Shawqi seems to lose inspiration and steam. It is not just that the following scenes lack the crisp wit, natural fluidity and pictorial vividness of the initial one: they are also flimsily connected and shabbily built. One fails to see the point of them since they neither add up to a plot nor develop the central character or any other. In one scene we are introduced to her current husband, a greedy, foul-mouthed drunken lawyer who, like the rest of her former husbands is only after her fortune. In another scene, we see her with some young female visitors; but though the verse here recovers something of its initial liveliness and bite, and despite a sharp dig at the traditional mode of conducting marriages in Egypt then (when prospective brides were never consulted), the scene remains largely pointless. The first act ends with Huda rushing off in all her finery, to do some visiting herself.

Act two begins with the attempts of the drunken husband to coax her into selling her land to cover his debts; she obstinately refuses and he breaks into a violent rage. Soon enough, the scene develops into a full-blooded slap-stick farce, with both spouses chasing each other, waving sticks, and with the female neighbours pitching in to chastise the loofer and beat him off the premises. In the following scene, which brings the play to a close, we are suddenly faced with a completely new character: it is Huda's last

El-Asfour's solutions to the formal problems of the play were both simple and ingenious. Instead of springing Huda's last husband and the news of her death at the audience in the final scene, he opened the show with the funeral, a ritual that has vast theatrical potentials which he fully exploited. In his hands, it turned into a wild pageantry, a festive, riotous carnival with equal measures of mirth and dirge, song and wailing, dole and dancing. The funeral brings most of the characters of the play together in a natural way as mourners and introduces them to the audience: it also dispels the gloom that surrounds the idea of death from the start. The will, however, is kept a secret till the end.

Having begun with the funeral, El-Asfour had to find a way to introduce the heroine and rather than resort to the obviously indicated technique of "flash-back", he opted for fantasy. Without changing the set (which features a huge white tomb at the back above a flight of steps) he shifts the second scene to the underworld. Huda enters in a cloud of smoke, in a white mantle, with a beautiful bunch of female spirits fluttering around her. Within five minutes, however, she is inspecting herself in many mirrors, receiving friends and callers, chattering about her husbands and generally reliving her former earthly life down to its smallest details. As likely as not, El-Asfour seems to be saying, the other life will turn out to be a copy of this one. What a prospect.

Another major alteration made by El-Asfour was recasting the play in the mould of a musical comedy in collaboration with composer Ali Said and lyricist Gamal Bakheet. This allowed him to counterpoint classical and colloquial verse in a most entertaining way and also to counterpoint the past and present and give the show stylistic and technical gamut, from abstract to realist, from wood cut to lithograph. The Atelier hosts two exhibitions. In the upstairs gallery are 30 elegant brass sculptures by Soham Affit while the Rath Seddiq Room is given over to calligraphic works by Mounir El-Sharouni which strike a balance between modernity and tradition.

## Around the galleries

ENGRAVINGS by several Greek artists, both contemporary and from the earlier part of the century, are on show at the Museum of Modern Art before they move on to the Hellenic foundation, Alexandria. The 45 engravings run a wide stylistic and technical gamut, from abstract to realist, from wood cut to lithograph.

The Atelier hosts two exhibitions. In the upstairs gallery are 30 elegant brass sculptures by Soham Affit while the Rath Seddiq Room is given over to calligraphic works by Mounir El-Sharouni which strike a balance between modernity and tradition.

Paintings by Sayed Saad El-Din are on exhibit at Khan Maghrabi Gallery. A dream-like atmosphere pervades the paintings and the figures are symbolically charged. Sharing the Khan Maghrabi gallery space are 45 ceramic pieces by Mohamed Mandoor. Worth noting is the beautifully portrayed *sebou caf* delicia.

The gallery attached to the Faculty of Specialised Education, Dokki hosts an exhibition of calligraphic works by a group of students. These are all in Kufic script.

Reviewed by Nagwa El-Ashri



photos: Sherif Saad



Top, clockwise: Nahmia Saad, deserving of more exposure; Gamal Abdel-Nasser, creator of natty executive toys on the verge of unravelling, and Abdel-Hadi El-Gazzar. Size is, it seems, important, but is it all?

## A grain of sand

Nigel Ryan attempts to see the world in miniature

Miniatures — it is a marvellously rounded word to describe something small. Not, of course, that size need be important. You can, after all, fit an awful lot into a very small space. Miniatures can be fulsome, and they can positively burgeon. Currently they fill the walls of Espace, which for such tiny objects is no mean feat.

The gallery has gathered together the works of 18 artists, ranging from Abdel-Hadi El-Gazzar to Ghada Amer. There are drawings, paintings, collages, sculptures and embroidery. They share just one thing. All are diminutively proportioned.

It is an odd assembly of works, and one might legitimately question the rationale behind such a group show. In conception the only equivalent I can think of would be to curate an exhibition comprising works by Renoir, Rembrandt and Rauschenberg, and then claim that these artists inform each other's production simply because their names begin with the same letter. A ludicrous proposition but one which, like this exhibition of miniatures, could well make for an amusing show. The secret is simply to undermine the rubric of free association.

Some of the exhibits are simple. Ghada Amer, for instance, shows three square embroideries that give the traditional sampler an extra-traditional twist. The texts she chooses to embroider are not quite the improving or optimistic maxims of yesterday. Home can no longer, as a matter of course, be thought of as sweet. Every day in every way we do not automatically get better. Amer instead adopts slightly grizzled platitudes. In broken gold thread we read not only that 'fear exists' but that 'happiness doesn't exist'. We read, too, through the frayed pieces of gold, the words 'beautiful women rich men', hardly a novel piece of word association though new enough, perhaps, on a sampler.

Amer's pieces, like those of Omar El-Fayoumi, Ibrahim El-Haddad, Gamal Abdel-Nasser and Hussein Sherif, appear to have been produced specifically for this show. Other exhibits — most obviously those of Seif and Adham Wani, Abdel-Hadi El-Gazzar, El-Hussein Fahmi, Hamed Nada, El-Hussein Fawzi and Nahmia Saad — are here more by accident than design, being small enough to be thought of as miniatures and sufficiently accessible to be included in the show. Tellingly, none of the works in the second group are actually being offered for sale.

The two engravings by Nahmia Saad must count

among the most intriguing exhibits in the show. In a surprisingly short career — the catalogue notes that the artist died in 1945, aged only 32 — Saad produced engravings that marry the angularities of a post-cubist pictorial vocabulary with the Egyptian landscape for more successfully than many of his more celebrated contemporaries. The two engravings appear to demand a narrative: they may or may not have been conceived as illustrations. What is certain, though, is that Saad is deserving of greater exposure, less because of the two drawings included — Tamara de Lempicka stylisations of peasant dress, as yucky as they sound — than because of two perfectly executed miniatures. He is hung next to El-Hussein Fawzi, another pioneer engraver, whose search for mood, in the single example of his work included here, leads to nothing more evocative than a smudged *chiaroscuro*.

Saad's drawings, like several of the exhibits, appear to be framed pages from the artist's sketch books. There is a throwaway sketch by Mohamed Nagui, a rather unfortunate profile, pillbox hat, curls, snub nose, red lips and absent chin, that one hopes was never seen by the subject. It looks, thankfully, as if it were drawn surreptitiously, perhaps a portrait of a fellow traveller on the tram or a diner at the adjacent table in some restaurant.

Nagui is joined by two other Alexandrians, the Wani brothers, in the sketch book stakes. Neither artist, in the several pieces included in this exhibition, really labours a point. A few lines, a final flourish and all is said and done, be it in the bull ring or the skating rink. Not bad going for works that seldom attain the dimensions of a postcard.

These are the sketches. When they satisfy, it is not because of a lack of ambition but because they are what they are — abbreviations, bits and pieces kept to one side, never intended to be representative but rather the pictorial equivalent of notes towards.

In the days when cabinet making was a thoroughly respectable craft, apprentices were required to produce miniature versions of full-sized pieces of furniture, foot high bureaus containing all the details — veneer, marquetry, drawers, handles — that would be found in the real thing. The finished objects were intended as a display of dexterity and an advertisement of skill. In producing a miniature the temptation facing painters, of course, is to follow the path of the apprentice cabinet

maker and simply miniaturise your larger works. Though this is not necessarily a bad thing it is a play fraught with potential dangers. When successful it can make the 'full-sized' originals seem overblown. Unsuccessful it becomes a pointless exercise, no more interesting than any other waste of time.

The sculpture of Gamal Abdel-Nasser is a case in point. Typically, he produces larger pieces of the same subjects as those exhibited at Espace — a cockerel, a whirling dervish with wire skirt and plastic dolls torso, an emaciated Michelin man — though his inclination is then to add details that can be distractingly fussy. Here he has miniaturised but at the same time pared down the details. Perhaps it is because he has miniaturised only his most whimsical pieces that the play mostly works. The reduction plays up the toy-like aspect of his sculpture, at the same time sacrificing nothing of importance. The results are natty, executive toys about to unravel.

Other painters follow the same pattern. With Hussein Sherif the result is to emphasise the depth of his residual landscapes. He fits a great deal of texture into surprisingly little space. These are clever paintings, incorporating elements of collage and mixing media with a certain aplomb.

Omar El-Fayoumi, whose more usual, heavily iconic work — exhibited, incidentally, in this same space quite recently — one would expect to lend itself neatly to such reductions, instead opts for a series of interior scenes, of the café and sitting-room. While the notation is often simplified, atmosphere, more often than not is dissipated in a certain fussiness. It is as if by overloading the tiny picture plane he wants to emphasise its smallness, which seems a somewhat redundant exercise. And while, individually, some pieces work well, their success is as dissipated as the artist's atmospherics. A case of too much leading to too little.

Sherif Abdel-Badie shows several folksy scenes completed in the same orange palette, a kind of impastoed colouring of Russian *luboks*, an unconvicted naïveté that again seems to demand a narrative.

Among the most successful miniaturisations included in the current exhibition are those of Assem Sharaf. Watercolours and dry ink describe a disturbing world, occupied by ambiguous figures, half human, half animal. There is nothing reassuring about this postage stamp-sized universe. Its wraith-like occupants meta-

morphose in watery landscapes. Sharaf constructs a Blakean intensity that gains its strength from the claustrophobic, enclosed, submarine spaces. His particular version of minimalism becomes the vehicle for greater resonance, which, in the end, is what real miniatures are all about.

The three small pieces by Adel El-Siwi serve as exemplars of his larger works, a continuation in terms of both technique and themes. The same might be said of Mohamed Abia, except for the fact that these are older works. They have, in consequence, a kind of retrospective interest.

The single ink drawing by Abdel-Hadi El-Gazzar qualifies for inclusion simply because of size though it is, admittedly, one of the largest exhibits, measuring a full 15.5 x 17cm. Untitled and undated, it places the head and shoulders of a hefty woman, a tight-lipped Brunhilde, before an intricately carved screen. El-Gazzar, the very model of the artist-sorcerer, loads his image with amulets and charms, adorning the backdrop with as much miserable savagery as a medieval scribe might devote to the illumination of hell.

But there is more to an artwork than its size, and it is pictures like that provided by El-Gazzar that lead once again to questions as to the purpose of this exhibition. Perhaps the title, *Miniatures*, as marvellously rounded as it is, is in the end misleading. To explore 'the aesthetic dream of establishing intimacy and closeness in the most limited spaces' — the intention of the show as explained in the introduction of the catalogue — simply inflates, to no real purpose, an amusing but in the end arbitrary collection of images.

Postscript: included in the exhibition is a single piece by Hamed Nada. It is a less than reassuring piece of folk-realism, a composition containing figures, a bird and an earthenware pot. It is scribbled on the front of an invitation to an exhibition. Peer through the felt tip and you can almost read the date, nineteen seventy something. With a scrap of paper at hand artists will doodle. In this instance the subtext is almost legible. In retrospect it lends a certain nostalgia value, of the sort that leads people to buy celebrity memorabilia for lots of money at leading auction houses. But it was not produced for a show of miniatures, wherein the interest lies.

Miniatures continues until 18 June. For full details see Listings, opposite.

### Books

## From ardour to Argentina

Mahmoud El-Wardani introduces some of the more interesting titles to have appeared in recent weeks

■ *Al-Sheikh Mohamed Abdou: Bihouth wa Dir-astat* (Sheikh Mohamed Abdou: Research papers), ed Dr Atef El-Iraqi. Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 1996

There is no doubt that Imam Mohamed Abdou (1849-1905), a pioneer of religious and social reform, occupies an outstanding position in the history of modern Arab thought. To mark the 90th anniversary of his death, the Supreme Council of Culture has issued a collection of research papers and studies focusing on the legacy of his work. Contributors include such distinguished writers and academics as Ibrahim Madkour, Atef El-Iraqi, Nazli Ismail, Mahmoud Zakzouk, Zeinab, El-Hadani and Moaa Abou Zeid, among others.

The studies cover a variety of aspects of Mohamed Abdou's thought, from the rational trend in his work to his mystical aspect. As to the documentary section of the book, this includes a selection of texts by the imam, alongside testimonies about him by his contemporaries as well as press clippings on his death.

■ *Mira's El-Hub* (Ink Mirror), Gorge Louis

Borges, tr Mohamed Eld Ibrahim. Cairo: El-Hal' El-'Ama Li-Qusour El-Thaqafa, 1996

In seeking to present a panorama of the work of the late Argentinian writer Gorge Louis Borges (1899-1987), Mohamed Eld Ibrahim has translated selections from his published short stories, poems, essays, and fables as well as a lengthy interview, together with the an autobiographical piece written by Borges in 1964.

The majority of pieces included in the current volume have been translated into English. It is fitting that this panorama of Borges' work should become available to Arab readers since Borges fell under the influence of Eastern cultures early in life, reading the *Thousand and One Nights* avidly.

■ *El-Hikm Wa El-Ghassan Wa El-Hamasa* (Wisdom, Madness and Folly: The Making of a Psychiatrist), R D Laing, tr Abdel-Maksoud Abdel-Kerim. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organisation, 1996

How to define wisdom, madness and folly? This is the question around which the chapters of this book revolve. R D Laing explores the question through

his experiences as a psychiatrist, working with families, schools, the army and psychiatric hospitals in Britain.

■ *Thuraya Fi Ghailoubha* (Thuraya is in a Coma), Ismail Fasih, tr Mohamed Alaa El-Din. Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 1996

This, the first volume in the National Translation Project of the Supreme Council of Culture, is a translation of a work by the contemporary Iranian novelist Ismail Fasih. 'Thuraya is in a Coma' charts the radical changes that have overtaken Iranian society from the revolution to the present, taking in the impact of the Iraq-Iran War. It traces these changes through the situation of Iranians living in their homeland as well as in exile.

■ *Mohamed Mandour*, Fouad Dawara. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organisation, 1996

Mohamed Mandour ranks among Egypt's leading literary critics. While keeping abreast of the latest developments in critical theory, Mandour never abandoned his belief that literary criticism could be a vital instrument of enlightenment and develop-

ment. The book in hand was completed shortly before his death last year and includes Fouad Dawara's important interview with Mandour in the early sixties as well as charting the development of his critical approach.

■ *Maat: Misr El-Farounia Wa Fikrat El-Adala El-Igama'a* (Maat: l'Egypte Pharaonique et l'Idée de justice sociale), Jan Assmann. Cairo: Dar El-Fikr Li-Dirasat Wa El-Nashr, 1996

The concept of 'Maat', identified by Egyptologists as a symbol of truth and justice, has long been considered a cornerstone of Egyptian thought. Jan Assmann, who spent several years working at the German Institute for Archaeology in Cairo and now teaches at Heidelberg University, analyses the Egyptian cosmogony in its relation to social justice in ancient Egypt. The author also discusses at some length the cosmic dimensions of the concept of Maat.

■ *Rihalat Geylogiya Fi Sahara Misr El-Gharbia* (Geological Expeditions in Egypt's Western Desert), Mohamed Fathi Awadallah. Cairo: Gen-

eral Egyptian Book Organisation, 1996

Combining scientific research with an accessible style, Mohamed Fathi Awadallah's very readable book is divided into two sections, the first on the Western Desert, the second on the oases, in addition to a number of appendices.

■ *Diwan El-Hamasa* (Arab Poetry of Ardour), Abu Tammam, ed Abdel-Moneim Ahmed Saleh. Cairo: El-Hal' El-'Ama Li-Qusour El-Thaqafa, 1996

This, the fourth volume in the 'treasures series' of the Cultural Palaces' publications, comprises the first part of Abu Tammam's *Diwan El-Hamasa* (Arab Poetry of Ardour). The collection derives its significance, in part at least, from the fact that it was anthologised by Abu Tammam. The poems published here include celebrated examples by the most outstanding Arab poets until Abu Tammam's age. The poems are divided into ten sections: 'poetry of ardour', 'elegies', 'culture', 'genealogies', 'invectives', 'praise', 'good qualities', 'biographies', 'witticisms' and 'invectives on women'.

### Plain Talk

I have always believed that Egyptian scholars and mission members studying abroad act as ambassadors for their country. Their activities and achievements can supplement those of official bodies, embassies, press and cultural offices.

In many ways, scholars and members of study missions can be more effective in furnishing an accurate picture of Egypt than the official organs which may be subject to the accusation, rightly or wrongly, of being propagandistic. Furthermore, experts tell us that messages disseminated by peers carry more weight than those spread from authority figures.

So ran my thoughts when I received a report about the activities of a young Egyptian selected for a four-month Fulbright research grant which she spent at Columbia University in New York. Laila Galal Rizk, a lecturer in the Department of English, Aleson Faculty, chose as the subject of her research the impact of the blues on the dramatic works of August Wilson, an African-American playwright.

Once at Columbia, Rizk took her ambassadorial role seriously. Apart from participating in roundtable discussions about Egypt, and giving talks on various aspects of Egyptian life, Rizk organised an Egyptian Cultural Hour at International House, a graduate students' residence and programmes centre with the theme of 'Celebrating Egyptian Literature'. She also prepared a brochure containing selections from Egyptian literature which was distributed to the audience.

A short introduction to the brochure explains that 'Egyptian literature has roots that go back more than 5,000 years.' As proof, Rizk includes three ancient Egyptian love songs by unknown poets. The songs, romantic, idyllic and humorous, belong to the New Kingdom. A few lines of one poem read as follows: 'Love of you is mixed deep in my vitals/ Like water stirred into flour for bread/ Like simple compounds in a sweet-tasting drug/ Like pastry and honey mixed to perfection/ While unburied days come and go/ Let us turn to each other in quiet affection/ Walk in peace to the edge of old age.'

A selection of poems translated by Mohamed Enani then follows with a short introduction about poetry as a traditional form of Arabic literary expression and about Cairo 'as the cultural and literary centre of the Arab world.'

Women writers in Egypt also have their place in the brochure. Excerpts from Nawal El-Saadawi's *Memories of a Woman Doctor* are included, followed by a poem by Malak Abdel-Aziz. In her introduction to these two writers, Rizk explains that 'women writers in Egypt have received recognition for literary excellence throughout the history of Egyptian culture.'

The brochure's *pièce de résistance* is the section on Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz, awarded the prize for literature in 1988. It quotes statements delivered by Professor Lars Gyllenstein, chairman of the Nobel Foundation, on Mahfouz.

Such an individual effort, as that exhibited by Rizk, can be as effective as any exerted in publicity campaigns. Many of our young people studying abroad, either on foreign grants or on government scholarships can convey the real image of Egypt. Prior to their departure they should attend orientation courses about Egypt and should be supplied with updated information on our culture. In this way they become the unofficial ambassadors of their motherland.

Mursi Saad El-Din

# A new brand of tourist

Can Egypt increase tourism, care for the environment and benefit residents of tourist areas? **Nevine El-Aref** reports on some ecologically-minded development projects

Hundreds of tourists visit the *zabbalin* (garbage collectors) village at the top of El-Moqattam mountain on a weekly basis now that garbage is recycled there. Developed by the Moqattam Environmental Preservation Association, the recycling project has opened up new job opportunities for youth, said Laila Kamel, the association's head, at a recent conference on sustainable development in Cairo. The employed youth sort out recyclables, operate recycling machinery and even make burlap goods. They also raise pigs and make fertiliser out of pig dung. As an example of a project concerned with the development of human resources that also benefits the tourism industry, Kamel would like to see it reproduced in every Egyptian city.

Wherever there is natural and cultural wealth, eco-tourism is a possibility, agreed participants at a recent conference in Cairo sponsored by the UNDP Sustainable Development Programme (SDP) and Friends of the Environment and Development Association (FEDA). Egypt, clearly, is graced with great resources: mountains, beaches, the sea and oases. The question conference participants posed was how to create a development scheme that protects these resources and, at the same time, boosts tourism. In France and the United Kingdom, the development of rural areas gave birth to rural tourism. And in Thailand, the cultivation of national gardens created new tourist attractions, said Mustafa Tolba, a well-known environmentalist and spokesman for the eco-tourism cause.

There are projects in the making that might bring about the desired balance. David Smith of USAID mentioned two American Research Centre in Egypt (ARCE) projects: a restoration programme in Gamaliya and a project on natural resource management, specifically the marine resources of the Red Sea coast. The marine project's goals entail installing more buoys at dive sites, protecting corals from damage from anchors, improving the environmental sensitivity of existing facilities, and developing collaborative programmes with Sharm El-Sheikh and the Ras Mohamed natural preserve, by having the preserve rangers train Hurghada's local rangers, for example.

Cairo is also on the agenda. A USAID "energy conservation and environmental protection" project is helping companies find more energy-efficient technology and less polluting technology. "We have just begun a project on air pollution in Cairo called Air Quality," said John Westley, director of USAID Egypt, who added that these eco-tourism projects are an outcome of the Mubarak-Al Gore initiative, which included a commitment to collaborating on sustainable development in all fields.

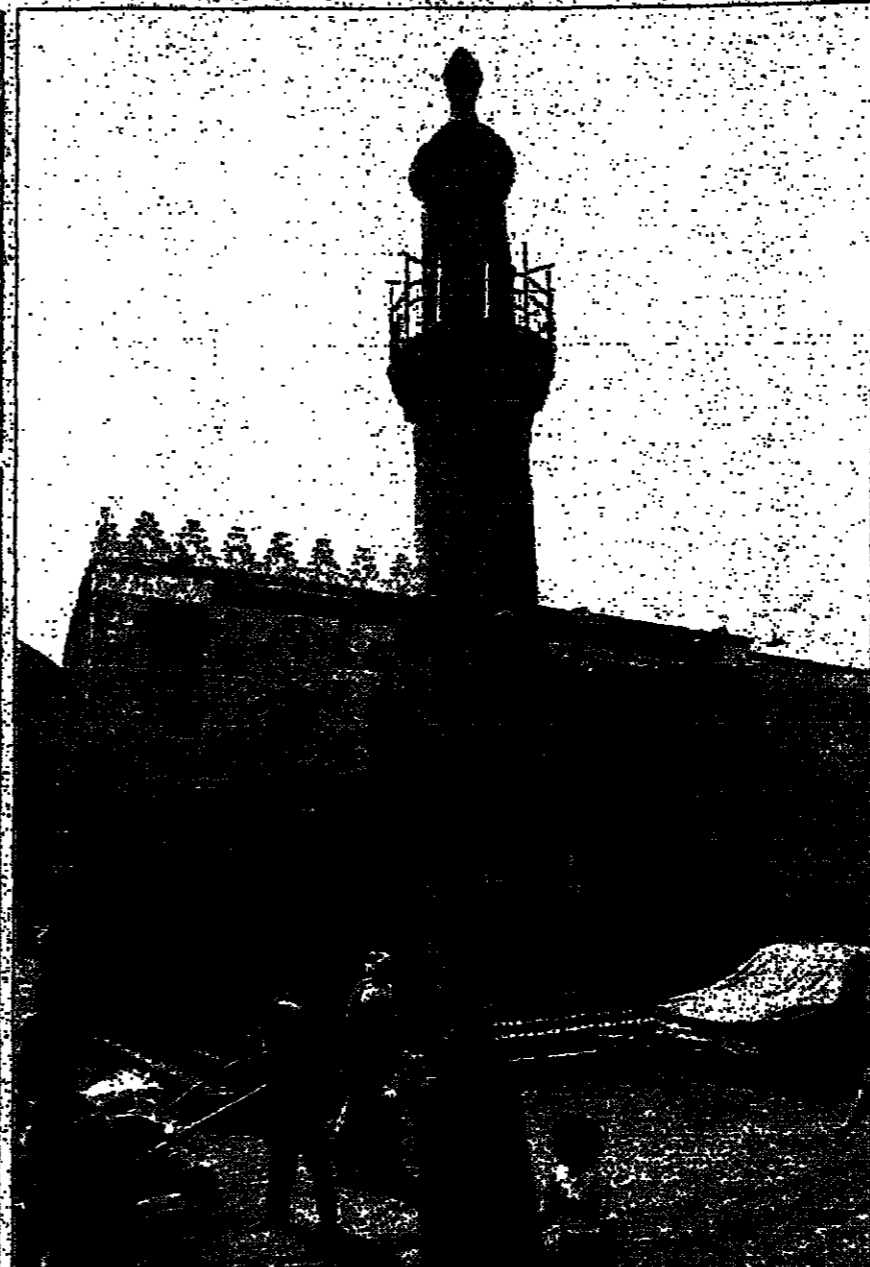
But there are complaints. Tourism might constitute a push for development but should not, as it does now, consume most foreign aid and investments, said Tolba. "The bulk of the money is spent providing services and consumer products to tourists, besides the costs of promotional campaigns," rather than investments in eco-tourism, he said.

Though monuments are clearly Egypt's premier tourist attraction, home as it is to over 33 per cent of monuments worldwide, Mona Zakaria, a specialist in Islamic architecture, pointed out that most of the monuments are deteriorating and those that have been restored by the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) remain closed. "We hope that Islamic monuments in old and medieval Cairo will be subject to the same care and attention as the Pharaonic monuments in Luxor and Aswan," she said.

As for areas rich in marine and wild-life, many of the projects that exist might sustain tourism, but at the expense of area residents. Tourist villages in Sharm El-Sheikh now have sufficient water but the actual residents of southern Sinai suffer from water shortages, complained conference participants. They pointed out that such development renders farcical the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism's slogan "Tourism is the future".



The newly-restored Al-Aqmar Mosque (extreme right) will be a more attractive tourist destination when the *Wekalat El-Khal* (above) is upgraded into a crafts training centre for women. Their products will be sold in *Wekalat El-Kheish* (right) when it becomes a tourist outlet with cafes and other facilities.



## A stake in their heritage

Rather than wait for the trickle-down effect, a restoration project in old Cairo goes straight to the people. **Sherine Nasr** reports

*Wekalat Bazar* on Tombekhiya Street is a case study for "sustainable development," a coined term for activities designed to ensure uninterrupted upkeep of historical landmarks. The development of Gamaliya into a tourist site hinges on a practical support system: the people who live there.

In this neighborhood near the Al-Azhar Mosque, specialised marketplaces and deteriorating buildings stand side-by-side with Islamic monuments from the Fatimid, Mameluke, and Ottoman eras, like the famous Fatimid Mosque of El-Aqmar. The area's 29 Islamic sites include mosques, palaces, *sabils* (public water dispensers), schools and mausoleums representing different schools of Islamic architecture.

"It is one of the poorest areas of Cairo," says Adli Bishay, an American University in Cairo (AUC) professor emeritus of science on a mission. "There are dozens of workshops. Air and noise pollution is horrendous and the people live in deplorable conditions."

Bishay is the director of a unique programme in Gamaliya, sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Urban Management Programme and the Ford Foundation. In the programme's scheme, quality of life takes precedence over simple restoration.

"The programme's main concern are the people living around the historic buildings, not upgrading the monuments themselves," says Bishay, who is drawing most of all on the area's human resources. The premise is that the residents have a stake in the local heritage: their participation in the improvement and maintenance of the historical landmarks is "vital," he says, for the safeguarding of restored buildings that would otherwise "become vulnerable to violations."

The team first carried out a social and physical survey

of the area. They then selected 50 residents from different social strata and occupations to attend public awareness workshops. There, the residents were encouraged to give their views on how their environment should be upgraded. "It was not our aim to impose concepts on them, but rather help them to come to their own conclusions," says Bishay. "We had to make sure that we spoke the same language."

The response was unexpected. "Even illiterate people had surprising awareness of what a healthy environment should be, both for themselves and for the historical monuments. They showed willingness to take an active part in upgrading the area," says Bishay.

Other workshops were devoted to examining the underlying causes of the deterioration of monuments: ground water, slow restoration processes; low allocation of funds relative to the number of monuments; and the use of some monuments as squatter houses, such as the entrance of the Beahat Palace and the Estadar Mosque.

Encouraged to acknowledge these problems, Gamaliya residents came up with their own solutions for improvement. "By this time, it was essential for them to start their own NGO (non-governmental organisation) to pursue these solutions," says Bishay. They chose *Sabil* (public water dispenser) Waqf El-Naqadi, part of an ancient *wekalat* that goes back to the 17th century, as the permanent residence of the newly-established Sustainable Development Association of Gamaliya (SDAG).

The association's objectives are to stop encroachments on historical buildings through daily garbage collection, to provide alternative accommodation in *Wekalat El-Tofah* to 56 families who now live in deplorable conditions and to relocate and group the workshops into a single industrial zone - away from the historical area. They are attempting to free this area from air pollutants emit-

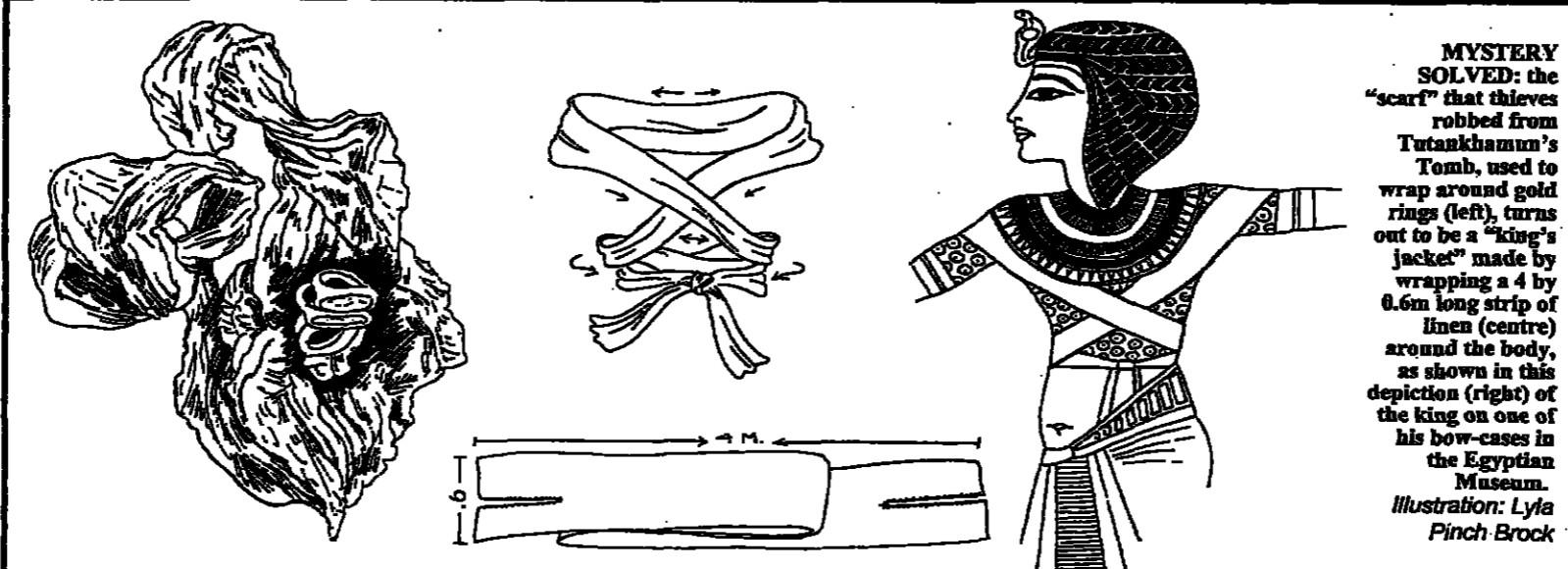
ted by leather tanneries, mechanics and burlap makers, and other workshops. The cleared site is to become a tourist centre.

The Gamaliya municipality allocated an area of 2,400sqm overlooking Gamaliya Street, known as *Wekalat Kahla*, as a suitable place for the workshops. "We have already discussed the matter with the workshop owners who are willing to move there as soon as the area is cleared. The process is now under way," says Bishay.

Residents are aware of the economic benefits of developing Gamaliya into an active and pleasant tourist destination. The residents, he says, first suggested removing the workshops and developing the vacated area into a tourist commercial centre north of the Al-Aqmar Mosque, with such facilities as a cafeteria, toilets, and a youth hostel. The community has also responded favourably to the idea of a training centre for small tourist-related industries.

Haj Said Emara, a member of SDAG, says that Gamaliya residents don't have their fair share of the area's tourist income. With the development of a local tourist industry, he believes this could change. "Through SDAG, we manage to point out the area's problems as we, the residents of Gamaliya, see them," he says. "We will help work them out one by one."

The SDAG project is a long-term one that augurs well for the future. Solutions are not being imposed from above, but are coming from a growing number of "Gamaliyans" who see themselves as playing a positive role in one of the most historically important areas of Egypt. They themselves are preparing the groundwork and the architects and archaeologists are restoring monuments. With the necessary funds, they will develop "their Gamaliya" into a tourist zone and bring a different world to their doorstep.



## Tut wore diapers

Clothes from Tutankhamun's Tomb reveal how the King once dressed. **Lyla Pinch Brock** describes some intimate details

What did Tutankhamun wear to keep warm in winter? "Probably lots and lots of underwear," responded Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, half-joking, to a question posed after a talk she gave at the Netherlands Institute on Tutankhamun's clothing.

For the past three years, she has tackled the job of publishing details of the collection stored in the Egyptian Museum since 1922, only a few of which are actually on display. By examining hundreds of items, she discovered that the king had Syrian costumes, garments bearing his titles, clothes designed specifically for sitting or standing, some bearing heraldic designs, and "imitation leopard-skins" among real ones.

Vogelsang-Eastwood, an expert on "the archaeology of textiles", whose goal is to try and find out what Tutankhamun wore and when he wore it, entertained the audience by coaxing volunteers to try on actual garments made in bleached cotton copied from originals. The clothes ranged from underwear to elaborately embroidered robes worn only for ceremonial occasions and included gloves, metal corsets, sandals and jewelry. No crowns were found; they were doubtless passed on to the next rulers.

"I want to take us away from the idea of Tutankhamun as a dead king. Let us see what he looked like as a living entity," said Vogelsang-Eastwood who, with her team, has sometimes had to work with small fragments and resort to a lot of detective work.

When Tutankhamun died in 1325 BC, his body and his wardrobe were placed in a small tomb in the Valley of the Kings. Ancient robbers broke in and began rifling the chests; good quality linen was an extremely valuable commodity and this was one of their goals. But they were caught in the act and the priests repacked the boxes. In their haste, they unfortunately damaged some of the clothes.

Howard Carter, who discovered the tomb, found in one box gold rings bound up in a long strip of linen (4 by 0.6m) which Vogelsang-Eastwood says was actually a "king's jacket".

It may come as a surprise to learn that textiles were the largest category of objects from the tomb. Over 500 pieces have been identified and catalogued. In the museum, they are still stored in their original boxes, with Carter's notes written on newspapers dated 22 December, 1922. Unfortunately, he found they had suffered a lot of damage.

"Beneath the sandals there was a mass of decayed cloth, much of it of the consistency of soot, thickly spangled throughout with rosettes and sequins of gold and silver. This, said to relate, represents a number of royal robes," he wrote. In many cases, Carter opted to sacrifice the cloth to save the decoration.

Vogelsang-Eastwood has traced the history and use of each garment by comparing the originals to a complete corpus of images of Tutankhamun in every known costume. They also refer to over 1,000 photographic plates taken by Harry Burton, the Metropolitan Museum photographer of the Tutankhamun expedition. Burton's photos form the basis for line drawings, coloured drawings and finally, actual portraits of the king wearing the garments.

The construction of a garment was often simple, based on the size of a finished length of woven fabric. Sashes were one long strip; robes, a folded length with the edges left fringed and the sides sewn up, with a hole cut for the head; underwear was a V-shaped "diaper", and a headcloth which is a simple circle of cloth with a long "tab" to tie it at the back.

"Mends in Tutankhamun's clothing suggest they were actually worn," said

Vogelsang-Eastwood. "Some of his robes were covered with beading, impractical for a garment that could never be sat upon. It is evident they were worn only when the king was standing or in procession. He must have had many servants," she added, "because there are months of work in each garment."

Six examples of a particularly important item - the red sash unique to the "Amarna period" - were found, but only one is complete. In some, the ends were worked in tapestry and a few are tasselled.

"Tutankhamun is also represented wearing an overcoat, probably of leather or with metal inlays, or completely made of metal," said the expert, adding that there are also three false leopard skins in the collection - linen garments painted to look like the real thing. "One has the king's titles running down the front, gold stars sewn onto red and blue paws and head. The 'skin' was meant to be draped over the wearer's shoulders," she said.

A catalogue and a descriptive brochure for the collection is now being prepared and will soon be available at the Egyptian Museum.

## How to get there

### Buses

**Super Jet**  
East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

**Super Jet**  
Super Jet stations are located in: Alexandria (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramses Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

**Cairo-Alexandria**  
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Alexandria and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE26 thereafter. A VIP bus with phone access leaves Alexandria at 7.15am. Tickets from Alexandria LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

**Cairo-Port Said**  
Services every half hour from 6am to 10pm, then 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Alexandria, then Ramses Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

**Alexandria-Port Said**  
Services 6.45am, from Ramses Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

**Cairo-Hurghada**  
Services 8am and 3pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE40 each way.

**Alexandria-Hurghada**  
Service 8pm, from Ramses Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE40 each way.

**Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh**  
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Alexandria. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

**East Delta Bus Company**  
Buses travel to north Sinai, south Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qalili (near Ramses Square), Alexandria and Tugaid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to north and south Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassia Square. Tel. 402-723.

**Cairo-Ismailia**  
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qalili, then Alexandria and Tugaid Square. Tickets LE24; air-conditioned bus LE25, one way.

**Cairo-Suez**  
Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qalili, then Alexandria and Tugaid Square. Tickets LE24; air-conditioned bus LE25, one way.

**Cairo-El-Arish**  
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qalili, then Alexandria and Tugaid Square. Tickets LE24; air-conditioned bus LE25, one way.

**Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh**  
Services every 45 minutes from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassia, then Alexandria. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

**Cairo-Nuweiba**  
Service 8am, from Abbassia, then Alexandria. Tickets LE24, one way.

**West Delta Bus**  
Stations at Tahrir and Alexandria. Tel. 243-1846.

**Cairo-Hurghada**  
Services 8am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 each way.

**Cairo-Safage**  
Services 8am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 each way.

**Cairo-Quena**  
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

**Cairo-Luxor**  
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

**Cairo-Aswan**  
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

### Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramses Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

### Cairo-Luxor-Aswan

"French" deluxe trains with sleepers  
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.40pm and 9pm (travelling Luxor 6.40 am and Aswan 6.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians; to Aswan LE368 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.

"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers  
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE31; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

**Cairo-Alexandria**  
"Torbini" trains  
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE22 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.  
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 3pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.

"French" trains  
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE28; second class LE12.

**Cairo-Port Said**  
Services 6.20am and 6.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

### EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: daily 300-0099; Open 390-2444; or Helton 759-9806.

**Cairo-Aswan**  
Tickets LE300 for Egyptians, LE391 for foreigners, both round-trip.

**Cairo-Luxor**  
Tickets LE220 for Egyptians, LE280 for foreigners, both round-trip.

**Cairo-Hurghada**  
LE280 for foreigners, both round-trip.

**Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh**  
Tickets LE245 for Egyptians, LE321 for foreigners, both round-trip.

## EGYPT AIR

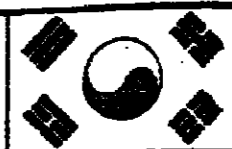
Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

- Abu Simbel Sales Office: 324836-324735
- Alexandria Office: Rams: 483357-482878
- Gleem: 5865461-5865434
- Airport Office: 4218464-422708-420257-4211989
- Aswan Office: 315808/1/2/3/4
- Airport Office: 486387-486568
- Assiut Office: 323151-322711-324008-329497
- Mansoura Office: 363978-363733
- Hurghada Office: 443591/4
- Airport Office: 442883-443597
- Ismailia Office: 328937-321950-321951/2-328936
- Luxor Office: 388588/1/2/3/4
- Airport Office: 388567/8
- Luxor Office Karnak: 382348
- Marsa Matruh Office: 934398
- Menoufia Office (Sheikh El Koni): 233382-233323-233522
- New Valley Office: 885/941695
- Port Said Office: 224123-222878-229721
- Port Said Office Karnak: 238833-239978
- Sharm El Sheikh Office: 686314-686489
- Airport Office: 686488
- Taba Office: 686530/14-530/11
- Direct: 5783628
- Tanta Office: 311758/3/1780
- Zakazik Office: 349828-349830/1

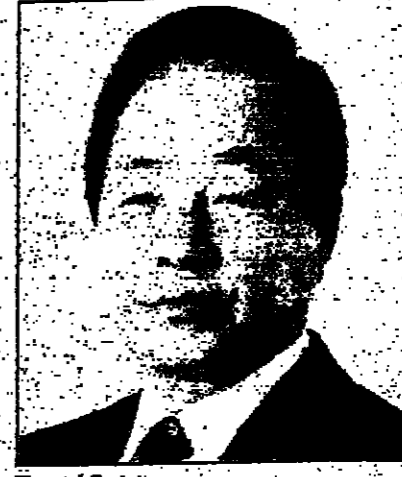


Egypt

## MARKED GROWTH IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

Republic of  
KoreaPresident  
Mohamed Hosni Mubarak

# Korean-Egyptian relations in economic perspective

President  
Kim Young-Sam

Egyptian-Korean relations have, over the years, taken on a wide variety of forms and in as many fields, ranging from oil to economic cooperation at the governmental level.

Korean oil company investment in Egypt has manifested itself in different forms. Yukong, a major Korean oil refinery company, has succeeded in oil production, jointly with American and European companies, in North Zaafarana in the Red Sea.

Other leading Korean companies such as Hyundai, Samsung and LG, take part in oil exploration in the Kharga area of the Western Desert.

As Korea heavily depends upon crude oil from the Middle East for energy, Korean participation in oil exploration in Egypt will be further undertaken.

With regards to the banking in-

dustries, Korean banks have jointly established the Cairo Far East Bank with Egyptian partners in 1978. Korean banks are increasing their capital input in accordance with the new Banking Law of Egypt, with the hope of promoting diversified projects which many Korean enterprises are planning to launch in the years to come.

Construction is another field which Egypt and Korea have mutually benefited from. Daewoo, a Korean construction and engineering company, has constructed large-scale power plants for many years. Daewoo is currently controlling the largest thermal power plant in El-Kuraimat. Doosan, which has also stayed in the construction market in Egypt for many years and acclaimed its good reputation, is build-

ing the Sheraton Hotel in Aswan.

The Korean government has been providing economic assistance to Egypt in the form of commodity grants from the early 70s, such as medicine, farm tractors and automobiles.

The grant of US\$15mn. worth of commodities in 1992 is notable among other things: The Korean government provided police patrol cars, vocational training equipment, medical equipment, together with military vehicles such as buses and cars to the Ministry of Defence.

The Korean government has de-

cided to provide Egypt with its Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) soft loan of long-term and low interest, amounting to US\$15mn. With this loan, a polyester textile factory will be installed at Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in Mahalla during 1996.

Sung Joon Yim,  
Korean ambassador  
to Egypt

The Korean government supported the Sharabia Vocational Training Centre in Cairo. It allocated US\$600,000 to provide vocational training equipment, to train Egyptian instructors in Korea, and to invite Korean experts to Egypt. It plans to support the automobile vocational training centre from next year on.

The Korean government as well as private business sector have so far trained more than 150 Egyptian trainees in Korea with various technical training courses for the last 10 years.

On 30 March 1995, Korea Science and Engineering Foundation (KOSEF) and the Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) signed the new executive Programme for Promotion of Scientific Cooperation. In accordance with this agreement, Korea will invite some Egyptian scientists annually for a one-year Research Postdoctoral Fellowships Programme and apart from this fellowship programme, 10 to 15 scientists from both sides will be involved in exchanging visits every year.

Egypt is pursuing economic reform programmes which require sophisticated strategies to implement with high efficiency and effectiveness. In that context, the previous experience of Korea will be a valuable model to follow and share with Egypt for the promotion of mutual relations. The Korean government offers various training courses of the Korean experience in economic development for government officials as well as economists of Egypt.

Korea and Egypt have steadily promoted bilateral cooperation through implementing three existing agreements: Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation, Air Services Agreement and Agreement on Cultural, Scientific and Technical Cooperation.

Safwat El-Sherif  
Minister of InformationIbrahim Nafie  
Chairman of the board of Al-Ahram

Ibrahim Nafie, chairman of the board of Al-Ahram Establishment and editor-in-chief of Al-Ahram

On the occasion of Egypt hosting the International Advertising Association (IAA) World Congress in 1996 in Cairo, the Egyptian Committee will hold an Egyptian Night on 12 June 1996, at the conclusion of the 35th IAA World Congress in Korea, where President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak will invite members to the 36th IAA World Congress which will be held in Cairo from 11 to 14 May 1998.

Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagui  
Egyptian Minister  
of Tourism

## Making great efforts towards success

The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism has succeeded in realising the aims of its tourism programmes, which have been implemented due to the continuous and outstanding

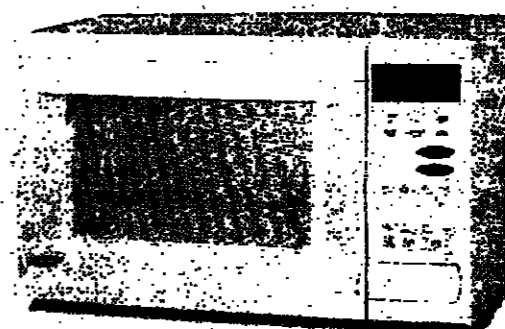
efforts of Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagui, minister of tourism. The minister is giving his full support to the Egyptian Night on 12 June 1996, which will take place at the conclu-

sion of the 35th International Advertising World Congress in Seoul, Korea. On this occasion, a special message will be addressed to South Asia, which includes Korea, Ja-

pan, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore and Malaysia, along with the G7 nations. These countries are considered new countries to be attracted to the Egyptian tourism market.

## Should imported mean expensive ?

The new Samsung microwave at a competitive price  
Cooking at the touch of a button!



- Six electronic preset buttons
- A weight button
- A revolving tray
- Automatic defrost button
- Safety button for children
- Coated with epoxy insulating material

**A two - year  
guarantee**

17 Litres LE 1099  
26 Litres LE 1299  
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Sole agents in Egypt:  
El-Muassassa El-Tholathia  
for Sales: 19 Abbas El-Aqqad St.  
Tel: 2636190 - 4016733  
Coming soon: showroom no.1 (Samsung Shop)  
1 Ennad El-Din Tel: 5880945  
Distributors: At major public and private sector stores

SAMSUNG

Brand New Brand New Brand New Brand New Brand New Brand New Brand New Brand New

## 21 inch - Satellite Receiver Samsung TV set

120 channels

information channel in all languages

90 local channels

An integrated system

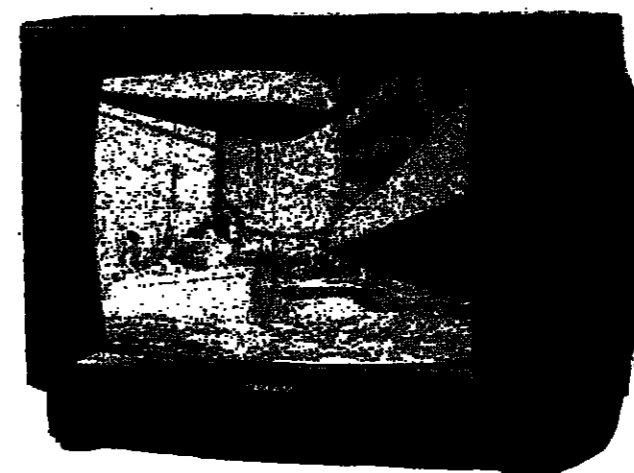
Cairo: Marketing Center, 2 Tayaran St. Tel: 4014375

Alexandria: El-Araby Tel: 5724559

Port Said: El-Borsaidi Tel: 603259

Ismailia: El-Karaali Tel: 225390

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14 - 16 - 20 Inch  
23 Systems - 90 Channels  
2 Speakers - Remote Control - Outstanding Shape



Spare Parts always available

Sets previously sold can be modified according to clients' requests in return for a small fee

Produced By Electronics Factory, Arab Organization For Industrialization

Permanent Showroom and Sales Centre: 2 Tayaran St.  
Nasr City Tel: 4012240 - 4014375 closed Sunday

Available In Both Private  
And public Sector Stores

Wholesale Requests: Abdu El-Shami Tel: 770006  
Saad Kamal, Tel: 015/365204 Misr Electronics Tel: 015/360208

هكذا من زيارته

Egypt

## MARKED GROWTH IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

Republic of  
Korea



### Excel 1300

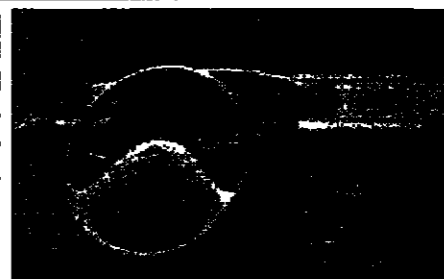


Excel 1300 succeeds with progressive engine technology. Experts have asserted that the progressive mechanical qualities of Hyundai Excel 1300 places the car in the lead for the most successful in the market. These qualities have made the car achieve a remarkable decrease in fuel consumption, provide a smooth and easy drive and is highly efficient on the highways of Egypt. These qualities include a 4-cylinder inline, SOCH, 1300cc engine, with a bore/stroke of 71x82mm, compression ratio of 9.7, a maximum power of 72/5,100 SAE ps/rpm horsepower, a maximum torque of 11.5/3,700 kg-m/rpm.

The automobile is 1,603x1,321mm with a wheelbase of 2,383mm, front track 1,390mm and rear at 1,340mm.

Fuel consumption is at nine litres every 70km within urban areas, 6.3 litres at 90kph, and 6.2 litres at 120kph.

The practical performance you need today



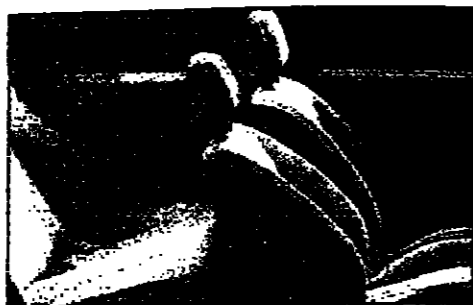
Its powerful,  
fuel-efficient  
engine delivers



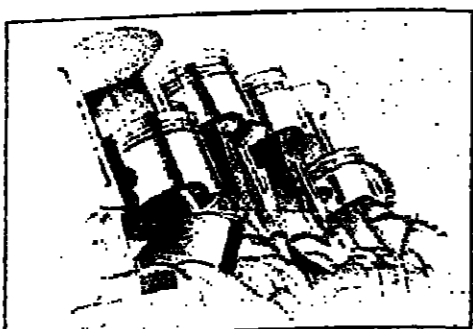
# A Work of Art for Only LE 40,750



## The new Hyundai Excel 1300cc



Spacious back seat room providing luxury seating at the same time

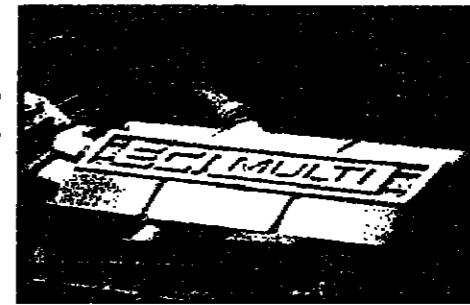


4-cylinder engine performing efficiently with less fuel consumption

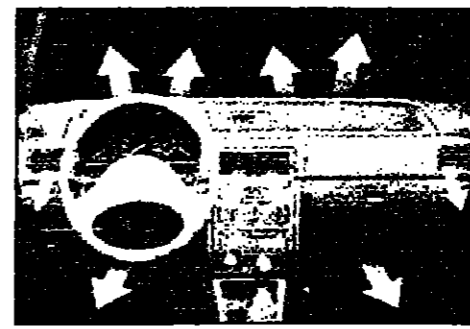


With and without options

Advanced engine made from the best materials to guarantee stable and smooth performance



The latest ventilation system that ensures a healthy atmosphere inside the car



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General distributor: Itamco 21, 23 Gezira St. Tel: 5702711 (20 lines) - Fax: 5700505 Alexandria Tel: (03) 5407513  
Authorised distributors: Calro: Ikhwon Ghabour Tel: 5748025 • Nabil El-Sheikh Tel: 2567898  
• Gaber Abdel-Shahid Tel: 4187555 • El-Tajale Tel: 245555 • Egypt Car (Ahmed Abdel-Rahman) Tel: 3408102  
Alexandria: Tarek Ismail Tel: 545418

هيونداي

Egypt

## MARKED GROWTH IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

Republic of  
Korea

Increasing after-sale service:

## Annual maintenance for Daewoo automobiles at Mobil service stations

Within the framework of its plans to expand on its after-sale services to customers, Abul-Fotouh for Motor and Trade Co. has made an arrangement for Mobil Oil Co. to carry out service and annual maintenance on Daewoo automobiles at its service stations.

Two stations, located at Nasr City and the Sheraton area of Heliopolis will begin testing this new system, which will eventually expand to other stations upon initial success.

This will also include the quick service station located on Zahra Street in Dokki, and the main station at kilometre 32 on the Cairo-Alexandria Highway.

The company will provide the most modern equipment and facilities for servicing the automobiles, naturally with technicians and engineers of the highest calibre of training. This comes in light of the fact that after-sales service has now become the most important factor when considering the purchase of a new automobile.

Abul-Fotouh for Motor and Trade Co. provides all original spare parts at affordable prices throughout Egypt.

## Daewoo planning to occupy 4th place worldwide

Daewoo Motor of Korea plans to occupy 4th place in worldwide automobile production by the year 2000. This strategy falls in line with the expansion and growth of Daewoo, whose operations are considered the embodiment of success of the Republic of Korea's automobile industry, an industry that is rapidly moving up the ladder in world automobile production.

Since the company has been permitted to export its automobiles to Europe last year (after the lifting of

the ban imposed on it by General Motors for exporting to Europe and the United States), a number of its centres have been established in England, Bulgaria, France and Germany. Every time that

Daewoo has entered a high rank in sales; proof of the superiority of the Korean automobile industry. Daewoo, however, is not satisfied with this level of success alone, for it has hastened to purchase automobile factories in Eastern bloc countries to expand its production of

There is no doubt that Daewoo will be met with the same run of success that it did during the last year.

Daewoo has also purchased 4 factories in the Russian republics, in addition to one in Romania and Poland. In an unprecedented move, the company also purchased Daimler of Austria, the largest engine designing company in the world. This is in addition to its factories currently under construction in India.

### Expanding within Egypt

WITHIN the framework of expanding its operations within Egypt, Abul-Fotouh for Motor and Trade Co. has concluded an agreement with Al-Musallami Co. in Zagazig making it an authorised distributor of Daewoo automobiles. A similar agreement was made with Fast Car, making it an au-

thorised distributor in El Minya. The agreements have been made with the aim of increasing services for Daewoo automobiles both within the heart and coast of the country, facilitating sales and service operations to its customers, rather than being centred in Cairo only.

## Daewoo announces the Tico model for sale

ABUL-FOTOUH for Motor and Trade Co., the sole agent for Daewoo in Egypt and one of the companies organised by the Abul-Fotouh Organisation, will introduce the compact-sized Tico model automobile to the Egyptian market at the end of June. This comes after the

model was shown for the first time at Automak 1996, where it was ranked most popular by the Egyptian market.

The introduction of the Tico comes after the major success of the Racer and Esprio models, both of which have 1500cc engines. Likewise the success of

its luxury model, the Salon de Prince, with a 2000cc engine, made a formidable impression with businessmen and major companies in Egypt.

The Tico is a compact automobile with an 800cc engine with every option available to the customer including air con-

ditioning, radio/cassette player, power windows and automatic transmission. While the engine may be small, the Tico is capable of reaching 41 horsepower, using only 1 litre of gasoline every 24 kilometres. The Tico also come in a wide variety of colours to meet the tastes of

young buyers.

Abul-Fotouh for Motor and Trade Co. also offers its customers spare parts at its service and maintenance centres. In offering this model to the Egyptian market, Daewoo hopes that it has met the demands of its customers.

## As if There's a Conversation

- 1500 cc
- 80 hp
- Air conditioning
- Power steering
- Power windows
- Adjustable exterior mirrors
- Central locking
- Automatic trunk
- Side protection mouldings
- Optional Automatic transmission
- Digital clock
- Fog lamps
- Automatic fuel tank
- Power antenna
- DBS brake system
- Fuel injection
- Child safety locks
- RPM gauge
- Rear window defroster



Sole agent: Fotrade

195 26 July St, Agouza El-Moharibeen El-Qodamaa Building

Tel: 3029522 / 3031595 / 3031583 - Fax: 3031593

Cairo: Abu Ghali Motors: Qobba St. Roxi Tel: 2580000 - 4555000 - Fax: 2596000

Giza: Ezz El-Arab, 13 Shahin St, Agouza Tel: 3497100 (5 lines) - Fax: 3489160

Maadi: Golden Inn for International Trade, 8 Road 757, beside the Grand Mall, Maadi

Tel: 3531122 - 3527474 - Fax: 3522949

Alexandria: Alifi Motors, Abdel Latif El-Sofani Sidi Gaber Street Tel: 03/5459905 - 5460485 - Fax: 5463772

Noureddin Mohamed El Sherif, 55 Horriya Road Tel: 03/4953496 - 4934087

Port Said: Auto Centre for Trade, corner of 23 July St and Mohamed Saleh Harb

Tel: 066/ 343626 - 326626 - Fax: 066/ 326626

Ezz El-Arab: Sonesta Hotel Shopping Centre Tel: 066/337187 - Fax: 066/324825

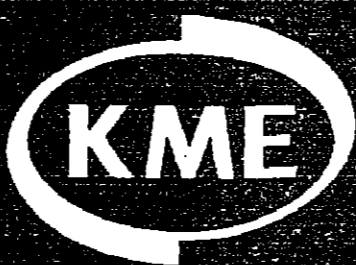
Zagazig: El-Mosallami Tel: 055/326160 - Fax: 055/329922

**DAEWOO**  
**MOTOR**

# ONLY HISTORY MAKES HISTORY



## KIA MOTORS



## KIA MOTORS EGYPT



Egypt

# MARKED GROWTH IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

Republic of  
Korea

## Kia's reliability: a trendy car receives justified praise

Countries of South East Asia have ventured into the field of the automobile industry. South Korea is one country whose industry comes at the forefront of other countries in the same continent. One of the most prominent Korean names in this area is Kia, a car manufacturer known for the variety of its models, produced by the Kia Motors Corporation.

In Egypt, the general distributor for Kia Motors (Kia Motors Egypt) supplies the market with the latest models. Kia automobiles have proved to be elegant and durable. Walid Tawfik, board chairman of Kia Motors Egypt, added, saying that one of the most important features of Kia Automobiles is their economic fuel consumption. Sephia, with its agility and smooth riding, is one of the most demanded automobiles in the market. The 1500cc air-conditioned Sephia, has nearly 30 options, including power steering, adjustable mirrors, digital clock and 6-speed gear box, remote-controlled fuel tank and many other options.

Sportage is a jeep presented by Kia. It is a 4x4 sports car, 2000cc, 135hp, with hydraulic brakes that help control this powerful car. The chic Sportage is both smooth and powerful that can be driven along the most unpaved roads without fear of breakdown.

The 1100cc Pride automobile is small on the outside, yet spacious enough within. The Pride automobile can seat 5 passengers, and consumes 20 litres of gas every 350km.

Credos is a luxury automobile that successfully blends its elegant shape with a practical modern design. Credos is a superior car, designed to give you a unique driving experience.

Kia produces other automobiles, such as the Besta microbus and the Besta van, both of which have been in great demand in the Egyptian market. The shock absorbers and the adjustable steering wheel add extra advantages to the car. Besta has a diesel engine of 2200 or 2700cc, with a 6-speed gear box. It also has a servo hydraulic brake system providing double impact, and power steering.

Kia also produces huge heavy load trucks that are being widely sold in all international markets. Ceres is a 2210cc truck, with a 70hp engine. It has a spacious cabin, as well as double tyres for unpaved roads.

Bongo truck model 24001K from Kia Motors is a truck designed for rough riding. The new 3500K has a diesel engine with a single or double cabin that has double tyres to guarantee strong performance on tough roads. The 3600S is one of the best trucks worldwide, providing both reliability and power with its 105hp engine.

Kia Motors Egypt attaches great importance to after-sales service,

regarding it as a priority to marketing. The company maintains a belief that a closer relationship with clients starts right after the purchase, and to prove it, Kia Motors Egypt makes all spare parts for all its automobiles available and is keen to provide the best service for clients through its professionally-run service centres.

Kia Motors Corporation in Korea is a partner in this success as it fully supports its general distribution in Egypt (Kia Motors Egypt). This comes at the best interests of clients.

## Planning for the year 2005

The Cairo Marriott Hotel saw the adjournment of the first conference held by Sang Yong International outside of Korea for its agents and distributors in Africa and the Middle East, with Egypt being chosen to host the conference. Headed by the vice-chairman of the board, the conference was attended by executive directors from over 70 Sang Yong agencies and distributors in Africa and the Middle East.

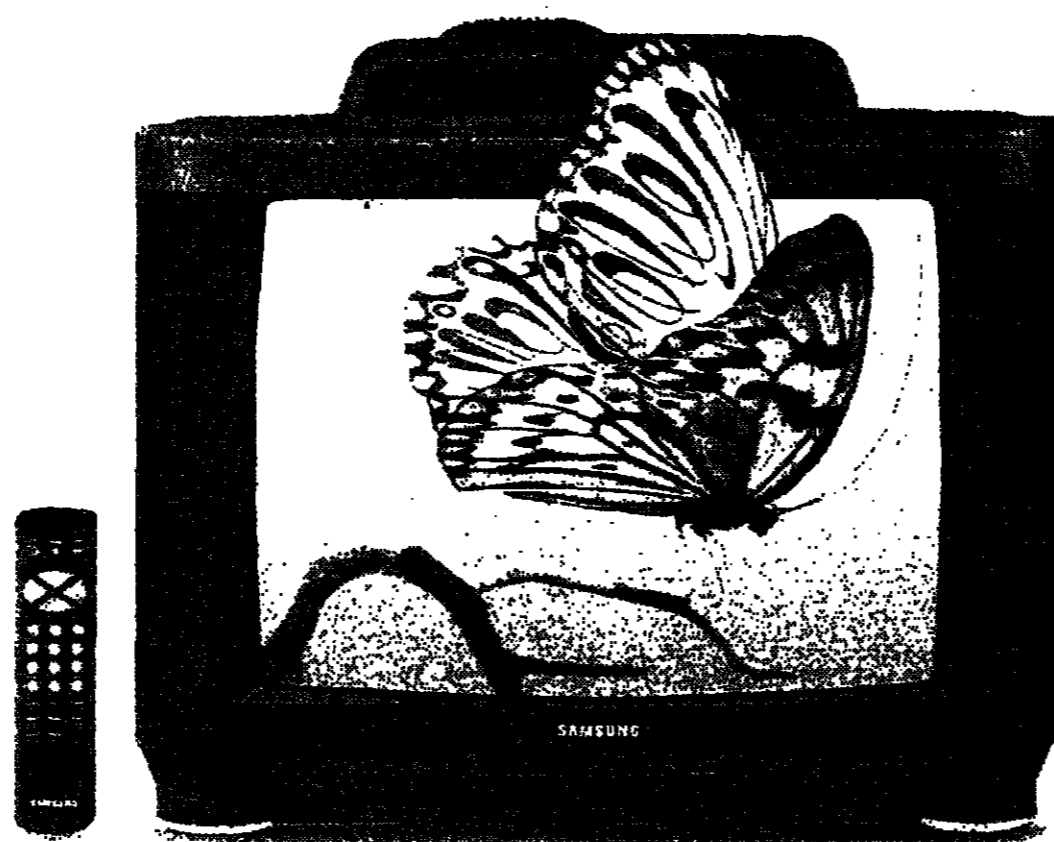
The vice-chairman presented the company's future plans up to the year 2005, explaining that the company expects to increase the volume of its production and that positive developments will continue to take place, making the company the third largest automobile manufacturer in the Republic of Korea, and ranked number 10 in the world. Along with the volume of production, Sang Yong, in cooperation with Mercedes-Benz, will develop automobile production with quality and excellence at competitive prices. Likewise, a preview was given of the new production line of models through the year 2005. Other highlights of the conference included:

Mercedes-Benz presenting Sang Yong with a new line of motors which will be installed in the Musso MG and KG.

The South African agent giving an excellent presentation highlighting the marketing techniques used that allowed it to sell 2000 automobiles in the first third of 1996.

The vice-chairman gave heartfelt thanks to the Engineering Company for Automobiles (SMG&W), the sole agent for Sang Yong in Egypt, which made the preparations for the conference in cooperation with MG for Tourism and Travel, reserving the luxurious hotel space overlooking the Nile.

Attendees of the conference also participated in the opening of the newest service centre for SMG&W, located at 80 Tirat El-Zomor St, Mohandeseen, and were impressed by the high standard of quality of the centre.



A quality beyond comparison  
that makes you care the less  
about price

Samsung TV sets with its Super Bomb Sound system takes you to a completely different world because of its elegant design, state of the art technology, three semi-circular speakers, the Bio screen, automatic memory, 90 channels, display of data on channel, and sleep autostop timer

Samsung TV sets  
14 - 20 inch

100% Korean made

A two year warranty - A five year warranty for the screen



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Fax: 4018277  
Soon Samsung Shop  
1 Imad Eladdin St., Tel: 5880954

Distributors: Omar Effendi / Benzayoun / Maadi (Voucher Home - Electric White Home - Golden Inn - Electric Complete - El Amir - El Beit El Hadi) Ogeil - Zamalek - Down town (Saddo - Azmi Kontaga - Shabouri - Yousri) El Shamaa - El Zoghbezi Mohandessen (Ogeil - El Talashi) Helwan (El Shamaa - Ogeil - Kontaga) Nasr City (Nefis - El Oia - Karim Class Electronics) Aswan (El Khawaga Beshri) Suez (Zomorroda - Saied) Sohag (Omar El Abboudi - Hatem) Assiut (Essam Ghoneimi - Ahmed El Ashri) El Shaimaa - El Ikhlis - El Dawla Luxor (Fathi Iskandar - Arkhashom)

SAMSUNG

# Opening of the largest automobile service centre in Egypt



Mercedes-Benz

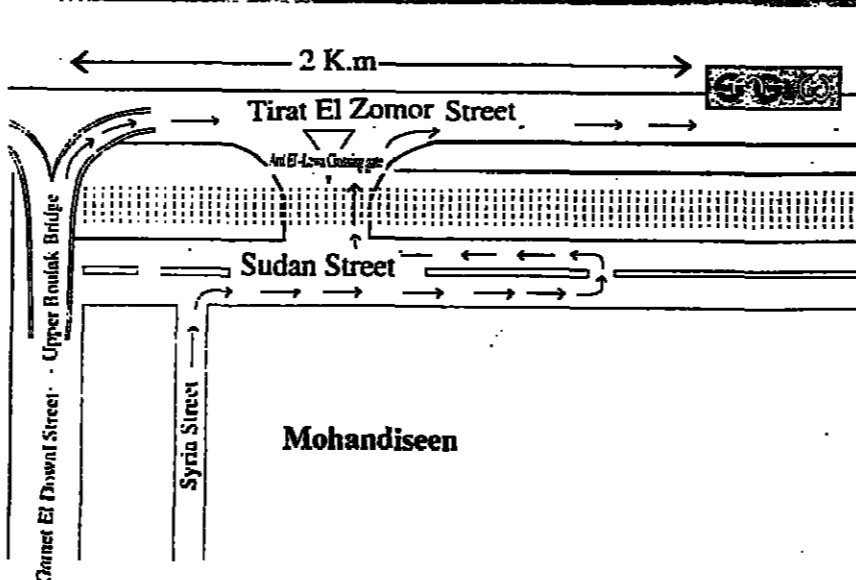
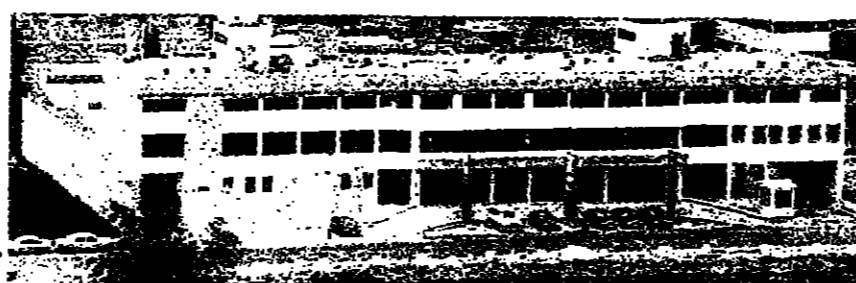


Volkswagen Group



SANGYONG

When potential and expertise mingle, it is your right to expect perfect service



ENGINEERING AUTOMOTIVE & SERVICE COMPANY.

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Mohandeseen

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Fax: 3026441

مركز من الإيجل

Egypt

## MARKED GROWTH IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

Republic of  
KoreaAdvanced  
Korean  
technology  
in Egypt

Dr. Ahmed Bahgat,  
president of International  
Electronics

The success of the International Electronics Co. (Ahmed Bahgat and Co.), Goldstar agent for Egypt, can be attributed to the transfer of advanced Korean technology which, coupled with Egyptian expertise, has made the company at the forefront of all other companies.

The International Electronics Co. manufactures 50 per cent of the final product itself. It has been awarded the ISO9001 award, and is always keen to present innovative products to the Egyptian market at moderate rates. The company places good taste and durability as priorities. Other distinguishing points include the availability of spare parts as well as punctual maintenance that is provided to clients within 24 hours.

In 1996, a giant factory was opened in 6 October City in order to multiply the production of television sets and VCRs to meet market demand.

The end of 1995 and the early months of 1996 will witness the construction of a new refrigerator, washing machine and air-conditioning factory.

State of the art technology  
at competitive prices

When asked about the recent state-of-the-art technology in the field of electronics, it is imperative for us to search for it in the Arab Organisation for Industrialisation. Thus spoke Fathi Ibrahim Shall, chairman of the board for the organisation, adding that production lines have already been installed and are now in operation, such as the SMC production line, which is the first of its kind in Egypt and the Middle East.

He added that a television tuner production line has been launched with a capacity of 250,000 units per year. This production covers the needs of all television manufacturing companies in Egypt.

Capitalising on its expertise in the area of technology, the Arab Organisation for Industrialisation has embarked on producing automobile speakers with a capacity of 1 million speakers per year, thereby feed-

ing local industries in the same area.

The Electronics Factory also ventured into the field of installing medium-capacity telephone exchanges for the armed forces (80-500 lines) which are also used for civil purposes such as hotels, hospitals, etc. This is being implemented in cooperation with Samsung Electronics. As a result, 40,000 telephone lines will be available in the market.

The Electronics Factory will also produce VCRs in cooperation with Samsung which will be offered in the market in the near future at competitive prices.

With regards to marketing, the Electronics Factory has responded to many clients' requests after it carried out a working plan aimed at modernising television sets equipped with satellite receivers so that they can receive 120 channels instead of 60, in addition to an in-



Fathi Shall  
Chairman of the board  
of the Arab  
Organisation

formation channel.

Concluding his interview, the board chairman said that many new products will appear in the market shortly, adding to clients' confidence in the organisation.

An Egyptian night:  
a night of a thousand  
and one nights

IAA Egypt Chapter will hold an Egyptian night under the name "A Night of a Thousand and One Nights" on 12 June 1996, the closing day of the 35th IAA World Advertising Congress to be held from 9-12 June in Seoul, South Korea.



Adel Mohamed Affi  
General manager, Advertising  
Department and member of the  
Board of Al-Ahram Establishment

Mr. Adel Mohamed Affi, general manager, Advertising Department, member of the Board of Al-Ahram Establishment and president of the IAA Egypt Chapter, said that the Egyptian night would be inaugurated with an address by H.E. President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak to welcome and invite the participants to attend the 35th IAA World Advertising Congress to be hosted by Egypt in 1998 and organised by Al-Ahram Establishment, founded in 1875.

The congress will be held in Cairo from 11-14 May 1998, and will be inaugurated by the president in the Large Conference Halls at Nasr City. Sessions of the congress will take place in the heart of the city at a large number of hotels.

The IAA Egypt Chapter cordially invites you to participate in the 36 IAA World Congress. Egypt's ancient history, the Pharaonic, Islamic and Coptic, will unfold 7000 years of civilisation, accompanied refreshingly by tours of Egypt's magnificent stretch of Mediterranean and Red Sea coastal resorts. With Egypt's renowned hospitality and its capital Cairo, the city that never sleeps, guiding you to an unforgettable dazzling nightlife, a special warm and wide open welcome awaits you.

We promise that the last IAA World Congress of the 20th century will be indelibly etched in the memory of those who, by their presence, will join us in the shared experience of making it the crowning advertising event of the century.

The largest and most complete service centre  
in Egypt and the Middle East opens

The largest automobile service centre in Egypt and the Middle East was opened amid great fanfare last week. The inauguration witnessed the presence of more than 2000 distinguished guests, from businessmen and others interested in car manufacturing, which included the head of the Investment Authority, Ibrahim Fawzy and the ambassadors of Spain, South Korea, and Greece. Vice-president of Sang Yong International, one of the top five companies in South Korea, attended the inauguration which coincided with the first conference for Sang Yong International agents and distributors in Africa and the Middle East.

The centre, located at Ard El-Lewa in Mohandessin, is comprised of four floors with an area of 5000 sq. m. The ground floor contains the service center itself, on an area of 4000 square meters and contains 48 working bays. Mercedes Benz, Seat of Spain, and Sang Yong of South Korea, have all provided the working bays with the necessary equipment, tools, and the most modern machines.

The service centre has three divisions: one for servicing Mercedes, Seat, and Musso, another for restorations and major modifications, and one for air conditioning and electrical maintenance. There is also another division for quick service which contains the most modern equipment, the best in Egypt and the Middle East, which tests the engine electronically as well as the fuel, electrical systems, and it adjusts the tires' balance and angles. And now, for the first time in Egypt, this service centre has computerised testing for front and rear shock absorbers. The division where cars and engines can be washed, lubricated, and provided with oil, was equipped by Mobil Oil Company of Egypt.

Different types of commercial vehicles manufactured by Mercedes and Musso have their own space for repair and maintenance, body work and painting, along with modern equipment to adjust the car's frame and chassis.

A garage lies on 1000 sq. m. on the ground floor which can host at least 20 cars. The engineers, technicians, administrators, and mechanics working in the service center amount to 150 persons. The engineers, and technicians supervising those workers have been trained abroad under the auspices of engineer Mostafa Wahdan, board member of the technical affairs division.

President of the company, engineer Shawid Ghattas, is one of the best businessmen in car trade and manufacturing, and his contributions in developing the company's activities have been efficient with his thirty years of experience in car manufacturing and service industry.

As the company believes that after sale service is the main goal in serving its customers, a fleet of six cars have been put aside to serve broken cars on the roads and pull them back to the service center for repair. The company provides a warranty to repair cars in the service center.

On the first floor lies an automobile showroom and dealer on an area of 800 sq. m. where the customers can find all types of Mercedes, Seat, and Musso brand automobiles. The company provides an easy payment service without the need of bank guarantees and it offers the exchange of used cars for new ones. On the first floor, there is also a wholesale shop for original spare parts and accessories.

On the same floor, there is an air conditioned cafeteria with a television connected to cable networks, and closed

circuit television for the customers waiting for their cars' repair. Suggestion boxes are scattered in the cafeteria so that the administration can carry out the necessary development which will provide the best service for the customers to attain their satisfaction.

The second floor not only contains the administration offices, but it also has a training centre for enhancing the staff's efficiency. The training centre has equipment that meets the modern standards, for the company believes in the importance of training to develop the future of the company and serve its customers in the best way possible.

The whole service centre is run by the network in co-operation with HP Co. for enhancing the service. The same floor has a restaurant for the staff, customers, and VIPs.

Cars Engineering Company fills the third floor. This company, which has the best engineers and experts for spare parts, is the sole agent for Seat and Sang Yong automobiles, and is the spare parts agent for more than 40 companies which manufacture original spare parts. The third floor has a library specialising in spare parts, and it contains catalogues of the best spare parts producers in the world, and it also has a microfiche, in addition to a catalogue on CD-ROM. More than 200 persons work at Cars Engineering Company, which has ten centres in Egypt, Alexandria, and many agents in other governments. The company is equipped with modern computer equipment, in co-operation with HP company which deals directly with the importing companies to provide the best service to customers.

A single advertising space is never enough to mention  
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## Milad Hanna: Building the future

Earthquakes, both metaphorical and real, keep throwing him into the limelight. His strong views on culture, construction and Copts do not always go down smoothly



Photo: Sherif Soudki

He is off to Turkey this week, to attend the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) as a representative of Civicus, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) umbrella group; but "Egypt's housing expert" was not chosen as a member of either the government or the NGO delegation. Milad Hanna is disappointed; after all, the professor of structural engineering attained his prominence in areas other than those strictly related to his specialisation. He has crossed strict professional boundaries into other domains, motivated by his views on the socio-political dimensions of the housing problem.

Hanna's political career remained dormant in the state-socialist sixties, but he became very active in political life in the seventies as one of the founding members of the left-wing Progressive Unionist Party (El-Tagammu). By 1987, however, his relationship with the party became strained due to the fact that he had accepted to serve, in contravention of Tagammu policy, among the members of parliament appointed by the president of the republic. Heading the housing committee of the 1987-1990 parliament, Hanna, however, resigned from the post one year later, because his "socialist orientations on the issue did not go down well with the committee members". As for the Tagammu, "although I never left the party, my ties with it faded away."

But when Hanna says he has abandoned politics, his seeming indifference might be just a façade. After all, he backs in a media limelight recently brought on by some of the more controversial political debates he has stirred up. "Political choices are really a reflection of oneself. I don't see myself in politics today. I have a position on current affairs, though. The best expression of that is scientific thinking. The one way to escape from the unhealthy atmosphere of religiosity that we live in, and of the fear of democracy leading to funda-

mentalism, is by adopting scientific ways of thinking. Our term of reference should be not the past, but the third millennium."

His renunciation notwithstanding, he does not deny the fact that he enjoys the attention aroused by the bombshells he has lobbed into the formal political arena. He denounced the National Democratic Party's "non-democratic" practices during parliamentary elections last November, and the fact that it did not include a single Copt among its 440 candidates. He has sharply criticised the Coptic Church for "its increasing hegemony over the affairs of Copts", choosing as his vehicle the somewhat sensationalist and widely-read weekly magazine *Rose El-Youssef*. Nevertheless, some have questioned the motivations for his recent criticism of the Church. Hanna himself speaks of "a very special relationship with Pope Shenouda. Nevertheless, our difference goes back to two trends of thought, ever since we both worked in the Sunday Schools church movement in the mid-thirties. It is a matter of what you perceive the role of the Church and the Coptic community to be. I believe that Copts should establish their position in society by being active in professional and public life, rather than being introverted and having their activities restricted by the Church". He will admit, however, that he aspires to playing a prominent role within the community, if not to actual leadership.

He places himself in the ranks of the opposition to the status quo — but not quite. Regardless of his self-proclaimed Marxist affiliation, Hanna is too subtle for the outright enunciation of dogma. In the early forties, when he was working towards his Ph.D. in structural engineering at St Andrews University in Scotland, his interest in politics was triggered by a fascination with the "democratic humane socialism" of British political life.

He returned to Egypt, dabbled briefly in various Marxist organisations, and joined the Arab Social-

ist Union's Central Committee in the sixties. Ever since, the secularist strain in his thinking has been dominant.

Hanna was born on 24 June, 1924. His mother was the daughter of a well-to-do Al-Azhar merchant, a woman with a strong presence, who imbued her son with a "pristine Christianity and a sense of independence". His father was a senior railroad employee. Today, Hanna lives with his wife, journalist Evelyn Riad. He has three children from a first marriage: two daughters, Moushira and Mary, who live in Canada, and a son, Hani, who runs his father's engineering consultancy office.

Since the late fifties, this office has undertaken several major rural and urban planning and construction projects. Hanna remembers the sixties as the high point of his professional career. He was one of the first engineers to be given consultancy status in 1974 by the Engineering Syndicate. Although he teaches theory of structures, he developed an interest in applications of the theory, creating new techniques in the use of reinforced concrete construction rods and acquiring an invention patent in 1960. He applied one of his inventions to the construction of his home in Mohandessin.

His expertise in the repair and maintenance of buildings has brought him into the limelight with every tremor since the 1992 earthquake. But he has often transcended the bare requirements of his work as an engineer, breaking into the public domain with his writings on housing. The expressions he coined (among the most poignant: "homes without tenants, tenants without homes") reveal his vision of the housing problem, "oriented to the poor — taking into consideration the social and economic impact of housing policies". Hanna alerted public attention to the fact that social violence and political fundamentalism are among the direct consequences of growing slums in the city.

His book *Housing and the Trap*, a reference on housing in Egypt and an important case study of a developing country, was published in 1992 by the Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation Economiques et Juridiques (CEDEJ). His other publications on the housing problem include *Uridu Masakan* ("I Need a House") and his most recent work, *Al-Iskan wa'l-Shyasa* ("Housing and Politics").

Hanna's vocalism on such a variety of topics is often criticised, and he has, on occasion, paid the price for his convictions. In 1980, in response to "Sadat's exacerbation of the sectarian crisis between Muslims and Copts by his involvement of religion in politics," he published *Copts... and Egyptians as well*, in which he traced the "political movement of Copts" who preserved their rights at the turn of the century through civilian leadership [and] the nationalist movement, which promoted the state's secular direction [in] abolishing differences between religions." In the seventies, however, "the ruling classes resorted to strengthening the religious Islamic currents with the aim of curtailing all leftist ideas. As a result, Muslim and Coptic sectarianism was ignited." His outspokenness landed him in prison in September 1981.

Opting for political dialogue, he was one of a group of Copts who met with senior Muslim Brotherhood members over three years ago. He remains ambivalent, though, towards the political-religious trend represented by the Brotherhood. He is categorical in his refusal of "rule in the name of religion". Yet as deputy head of the independent committee which monitored parliament's last elections, he expresses his reservations over the government's policies towards the Islamists. "The government believes more democracy will bring the Brotherhood to power, but this is not true. It might happen, though, if the government opts for de-

mocracy at the eleventh hour, when it is too late — but we are not at the eleventh hour yet."

His multi-faceted interests have led him to join a plethora of associations: a member of syndicate committees and human rights organisations, he also heads the board of trustees of a luxury resort on the northern coast. A writer at *Al-Ahram*, he has published fourteen works on housing, politics and culture. In 1993, his work towards human understanding and democracy earned him Egypt's nomination for UNESCO's Simon Bolivar prize. *The Seven Pillars of Egyptian Identity*, published in 1994, encapsulated his belief that a comprehensive and humane Egyptian identity should include, yet transcend, religious affiliations. He believes in the assertion of self, in breaking the bonds of negativity, to an extent which some consider Quixotic. He fell into a dispute with board members of the Coptic Benevolent Association (Gamiyyat Al-Tawfiq Al-Qibbiyya), which he heads, over his view of what the association's role should be: "to become more assertive, more involved in political, public life" — a view which goes against the Ministry of Social Affairs' laws regulating NGO activities.

He wants to break out of a restricted world view beset by various forms of fundamentalism. He published a treatise in 1995 commenting on Samuel Huntington's theory on the clash of civilisations, and Fukuyama's views on the end of history. He presents the "humane Egyptian alternative", he says, "of dialogue and cultural complementarity", derived from Egypt's history and the lessons of tolerance learned from the 1919 Revolution. He looks towards the "values of the third millennium", opting for the diversity in life which is "a cosmic phenomenon, in tune with the contemporary spirit."

Profile by Aziza Sami

## Pack of cards

by Madame Sosestris

There's something rather nostalgic about attending a special reception lunch in Al-Ahram's twelfth-floor restaurant. I've lunched there with the best of people over the years, and last Sunday, I found myself clinking glasses once more, this time with the organisers and sponsors of the recent Al-Ahram International Squash Championship. What made it all the more special was that the organisers in whose honour the

event was held were all good friends. From accountants to sales people to reporters — not forgetting the *Weekly's* very own sports page editor, Issa Mazhar, who had quite gallantly carried out her role as assistant to the tournament's general director — the people who had made the event such a major success were all employees of Al-Ahram establishment. And as we sat amongst the sponsors, including nationally renowned

businessman Tayseer El-Hawari and medical doctor Mohamed El-Garhi, we listened to *Al-Ahram's* editor-in-chief, chairman of the board and President of the Press Syndicate, Ibrahim Nafie, express his gratitude and amazement at the speed with which the event had been organised, and its astounding worldwide success. What Issa and I really wanted to know, though was whether it would be repeated again next year, and once that had been confirmed, we cheered with delight and proceeded to waste away the day-dreaming of possible locations, the \$140,000 prize money, and wondering whether a year was long enough to start taking private lessons from national squash champion Ahmed Barada.

The last time I spoke to Laila Takla, former member of parliament, lawyer, dedicated environmentalist and head of the National Association for the Protection of the Environment (NAPOE), she sounded quite flustered. And with good reason. She is currently getting ready to go to Istanbul to take part in the last United Nations conference of the century, Habitat II, which will focus on the issue of informal settlements world-wide. It's thanks to people like Laila that Egypt is playing an active role in improving the environment — the Environment Scouts Programme was initiated by NAPOE to allow youngsters to do their bit by cleaning and greening their community. The Programme's



There's nothing like celebrating a sports event by piling on the calories: Nafie cuts the cake as El-Hawari (left) and El-Garhi (right) look on; Bottom (l-r) Takla, Armstrong and Erian

I had the wonderful pleasure of being invited to a rather intimate dinner recently as a guest of the British Council. 'Intimate' in the Council's terms, however, could mean anything between two and fifty people, and there were many of us who were dying to meet the guest of honour, Hilary Armstrong, prominent Labour MP, shadow local minister in Labour's environment team and vice-chairman of the British Council. Here as a guest of the British Council in Egypt, Hilary made good use of her short trip by visiting the People's Assembly, literary classes in Qena in Upper Egypt, Egyptian NGOs active in areas of local development, meeting a number of local and feminist leaders, and attending a private viewing of a documentary film produced by director Atyaf El-Abedawi on women candidates in Egypt's last parliamentary elections.

And it's only by being friends with people like Laila and Hilary that I truly appreciate the life I lead. A gala dinner here, a reception party there. Give me the good life, and make it relaxing, that's what I say. None of this around the world in eighty days — that part of my life is over now. And what better way to indulge in a life of ease than by attending a song and piano recital by that amazing soprano singer Nabila Erian, and pianist Greig Martin-David Hales. Friday night will see me in the small hall of the Opera house as I revel in the music of Schubert, Ravel, Brahms and Strauss.

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